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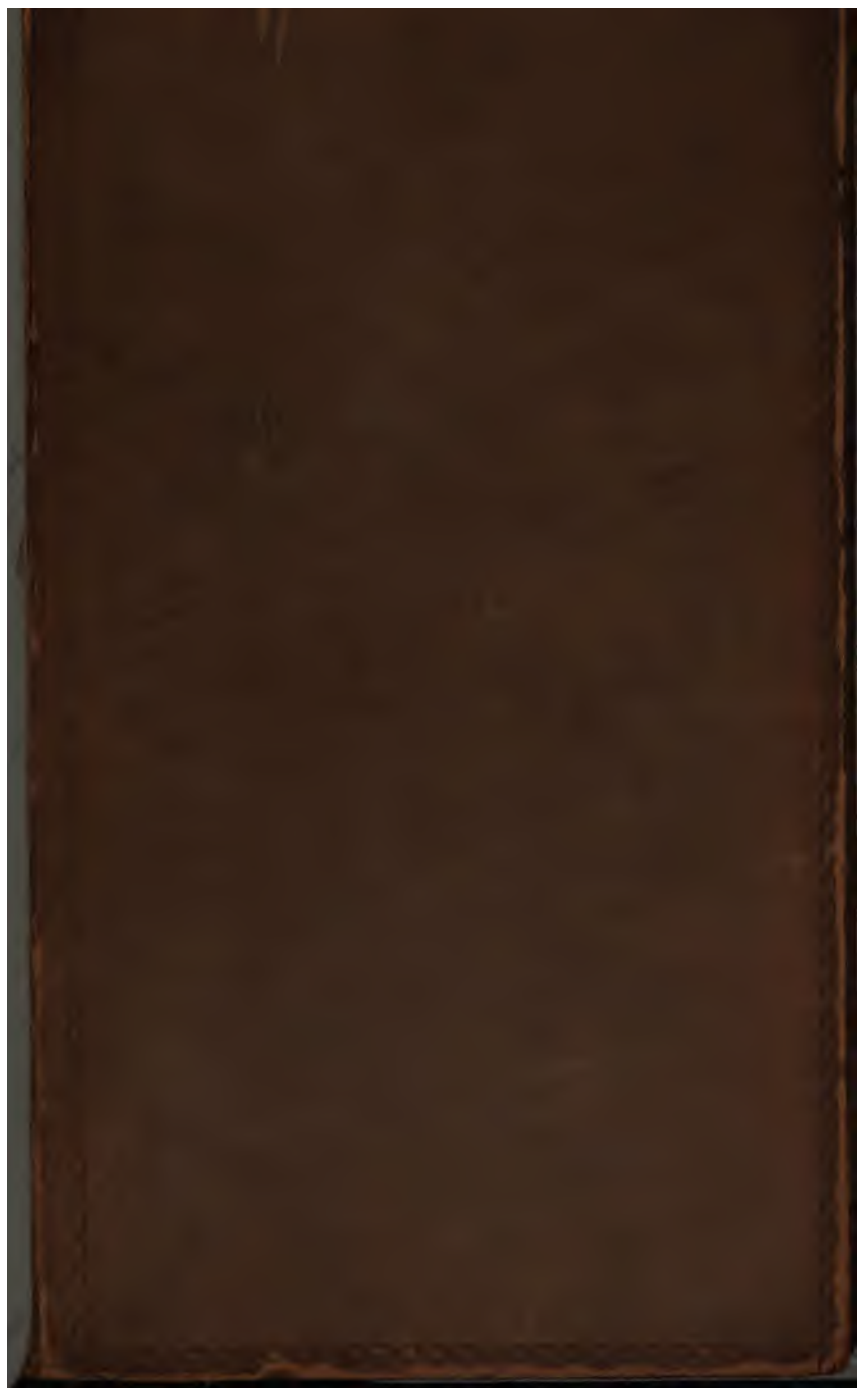
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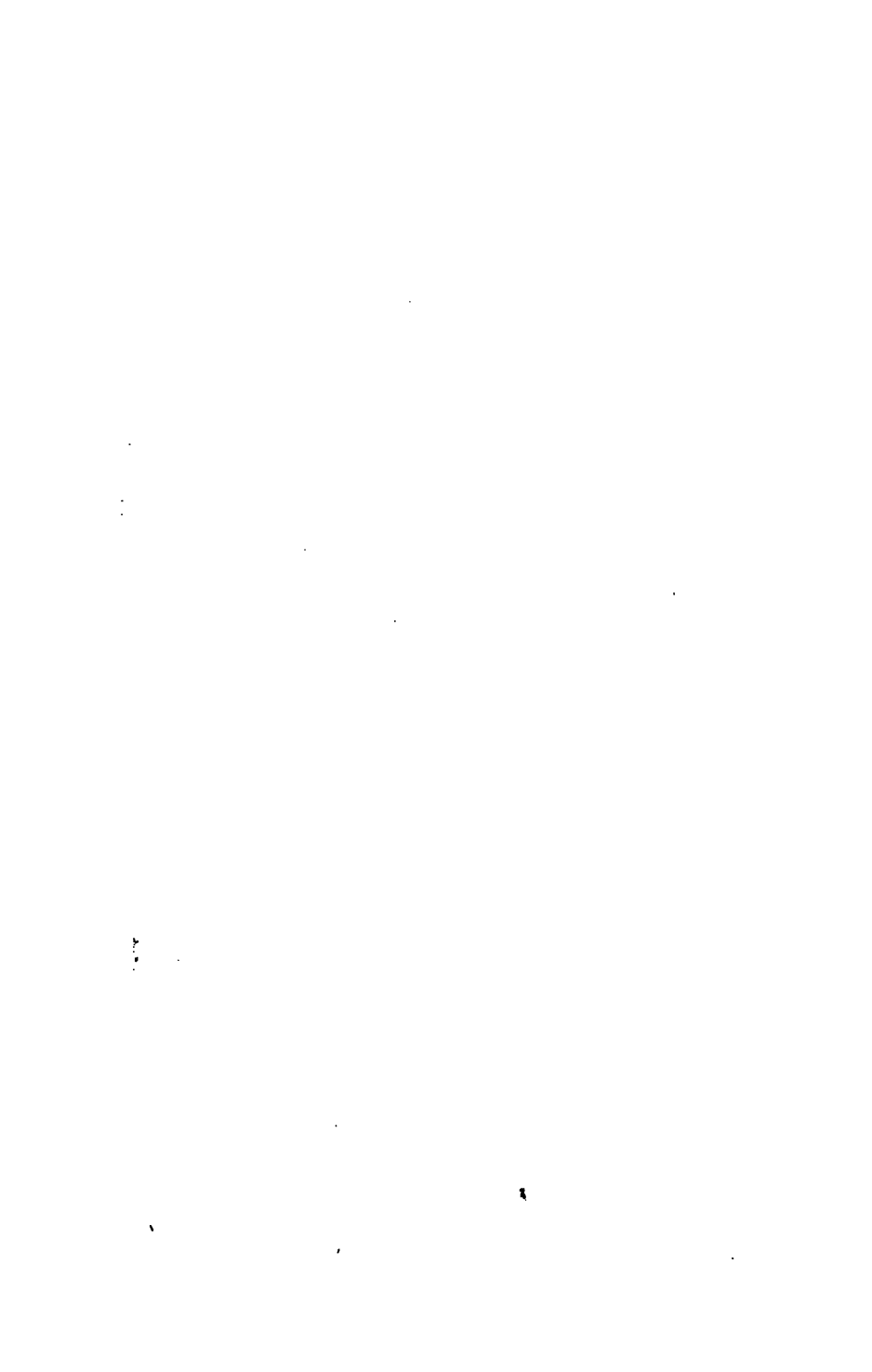


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J.H. 1826

PRACTICAL LECTURES
UPON
THE STORY OF
JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

BY
THE REV. W. BULLOCK,
MISSIONARY OF TRINITY, NEWFOUNDLAND.

“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children.—The Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy; and that which he did, the Lord made to prosper.”

GENESIS, xxxvii. 3.—xxxix. 21—23.

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THE
FIRST FRUITS
OF A
CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY'S PEN,
ARE OFFERED
TO
THE REV. CHARLES ALMERIC BELLI,
AS
A SMALL TESTIMONY OF THE ESTEEM
OF
THE AUTHOR.



LECTURE I.



LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

ACTS vii. 9.

The Patriarcha, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him.

THERE is something truly delightful in contemplating the lives and actions of those worthies, which the Book of God hath preserved for our instruction and pattern; men famous in their generation, and who, although long swept from the face of the universe, are still dear to Christian remembrance;—whose names emblazoned on the escutcheon of God's nobility, peer above the oblivion of departed ages; and whose spirits, unsilenced by death, and unconfined by the grave, still hover over us as ministering angels

—animating us by their example, and inspiring us by their renown, to tread the paths which they have hallowed, to fight the good fight which they have fought, and to press forward to the victory, which they have obtained—*Who being dead yet speak to us.* They are the living lights which compose the everlasting halo of God's glory among men. They are shining stars, upon the blackness of earthly darkness, revolving round the *Sun of Righteousness*, and doing homage to him, as their Creator and their God. *But one star differeth from another star in glory*, and while they all proclaim the glory and handywork of the Eternal, there are some which, by superior splendor, attract the eye, and wrap the soul in admiration;—of this exalted rank is that holy and highly favored patriarch, whose history and character, I design, by the permission and blessing of God, to make the subject of this, and as many more lectures, as, in

proceeding, shall seem expedient to the setting forth of God's honor, and our instruction. It is a task, indeed, well worthy of an abler advocate and a better man; and it is not without acknowledgment of my own weakness, and reliance on that promised aid, *which in weakness is made strong*, and which is sufficient for every good word and work, that I enter upon it; and I implore your united prayers, my brethren, for an unction of God's Holy Spirit, to assist us in the undertaking, and to sanctify it in the use.

Above all the writings that have come from the spirit and understanding of man, the story of Joseph and his brethren has ever been justly esteemed the most pathetic and the most instructive; no matter whether they be fact or fiction—whether they be decked with the poet's fancy, or invested with the charms of the sentimentalist—there are none that can in any-wise compare with it; no

matter in what relation, or with what disposition we approach it—there is a chord for every bosom, and a tone for every mind. The first tear of innocent childhood shed over a brother's wrongs, and the last that rolls down the grief-worn cheek of the bereaved parent, are alike dedicated at the shrine of this history; and while its fine touches of tenderness and sensibility are calculated to awaken every kindly affection of the human heart, it throws over every condition of life, its proper light and shade—and, verily, I do not envy that man his feelings, whose bosom is too cold to admit of its impressions.

There were born to Jacob, to whom God also gave the name of Israel, ten sons; but Rachel, who was the object of his first attachment, and for whom he had dedicated fourteen years of willing service, had continued childless; until God, at last answered her prayers, *opened her womb, and she conceived and bare a*

son, and they called his name JOSEPH. In a few years after she gave to him another son, at whose birth she died, and they called his name Benjamin: and Jacob, with these twelve sons, had settled with great riches, and many flocks and herds, in the land of Canaan.

The first mention that is made of Joseph's condition is when he *was seventeen years old*, and then, the sacred historian informs us, he was loved by Israel *more than all his children*. Many things, at this time, must have conspired to raise Joseph in the affections of his father;—he was *the son of his old age*, the offspring of his best beloved Rachel, and he was born after a long season of disappointment—add to these, he was at that time of life, when all the tender attachments are confirmed—when all the gentle sympathies of nature are quick and glowing—and all the parental interests are on the tiptoe of observation, to mark the opening virtues of a beloved

child;—while, to crown the whole, Jacob was, possibly, not without hope, that in this son, the blessing of the Almighty was to be shadowed out, and that he was destined to bear an eminent part in the transmission of the promises to his posterity.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, says, “Jacob loved him, both because of the beauty of his body, and the virtues of his mind, for he excelled his brethren in prudence.” Be this as it may, certain it is, that *Israel loved him more than all his children*, and, as a mark of this preference, *made him a coat of many colors*—a coat wrought with various colored threads, as the silks of the Eastern world are woven and worn to this day. Superior gifts and superior virtues are always the bane of weak and unworthy minds, but when they become objects of praise and preference, from being the source of envy, they become the basis of hatred and of malice; and so it was with the

brethren of Joseph, *when they saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.* Had it been the object of the historian to have drawn an exact picture of envy, he could not have chosen more suitable words:—*They could not speak peaceably unto him.* There is a maliciousness in envy unknown almost to any other vice—anger originates in provocation—revenge proceeds from injury—all other crimes have some retaliation to pursue, some passion to be appeased, or some gainful end in view—but envy is selfish and solitary; and as it always preys upon worth and virtue, without any incitement, save the consciousness of inferiority, so it is wisely ordered by the Almighty, that, like the scorpion, it should carry a venom for itself—and no bosom is so disturbed and pained as his who hath admitted envy to its abode;

tranquillity and satisfaction are vainly expected by the exercise of upbraiding and insolence—for, as our blessed Redeemer saith, *it is out of the abundance of the heart, that the mouth speaketh.*

I would to God that this hateful vice were confined to the brethren of Joseph, but it hath found its way to the brethren of the present generation, and I greatly fear, that for one who possesses it not, there are still ten who nourish it and cherish it in their bosoms. But it is not the less hateful in the sight of God, nor is it less offensive to virtue, nor less hostile to religion; sin is still sin, whatever shape it may take, whatever patronage it may obtain; and envy is a sin, the first fruits of all sin, for it was through envy that Cain slew his brother, and *through envy of the devil, death entered into the world.* Let us then be the more careful to guard against it, lest it prove to us, as to the brethren of

Joseph, an incentive to other crimes, and involve us also in similar misery and distress.

Now, although nothing may palliate envy among brethren, and especially among brethren of the same household, I cannot but think that some degree of blame attaches to the conduct of Jacob towards his favorite son, not so much in the superior love he bore towards him, as in the manner by which he distinguished him from his brethren; and the evil that ensued, in consequence, is a sufficient warning for parents, to beware of showing partiality in their families, lest, by so doing, they unlink the chain of brotherly affection, and stir up *the spirit that lusteth to envy*; for it was not until the brethren saw that Joseph was most beloved that they hated him. The youth himself was without guile and without offence, and, notwithstanding their rude speaking and unmeek aspect, he, neither suspected

their love, nor withheld his confidence; and this, with generous men is enough to disarm resentment, but envy dispels generosity, and hardens the heart. It is the peculiar character of innocence, that it is never suspicious—like Christian charity, of which it is an emblem, it *thinketh no evil*: but innocence is the support of envy, and simplicity is its nourishment, as the sequel of the story proves. For it happened at this time, that it pleased the Almighty to foreshow the future destinies of Joseph, in two remarkable dreams, which, in the most artless manner, he reveals to his family:—*and he said unto them, hear this dream, that I have dreamed. For behold we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose and stood upright, and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.*

Now envy is a watchful felon, and like the thief at his midnight wrong, takes alarm at every sound. To spirits

so impatient already, a less plain prediction of their brother's exaltation, and their submission, had been sufficient. *Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou have dominion over us?* were the taunting interrogations, which, in the bitterness of their hearts, they vented upon their unsuspecting and astonished brother; but he was too much used to their unkind and unpeaceable language, to be more than ordinarily affected by it; for God having again been pleased to visit him, with a second dream, more palpable than the first, we find him, without the least hesitation, making them acquainted with it. *Behold*, said he, *I dreamed a dream more, and behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.* This was too much for the malignity of envy to endure, and this his father must have immediately perceived, for it is written, that he *rebuked him and said unto him, what is the dream that thou hast dreamed?*

Shall I and thy mother, and thy brethren, indeed, come and bow down ourselves to thee? Now I apprehend that this rebuke of Jacob's was not the language of disapprobation as to the dream itself, but as the relation of it might give offence to the rest of his children (marks of which, it is more than probable, he had then discovered); and this appears to me, more clearly, from the singular conjunction of effects produced by the relation, and which immediately follows—*his brethren envied him*; BUT HIS FATHER OBSERVED THE SAYING. He observed it, as the prophet Eli observed the vision of the youthful Samuel, and knew it was the Lord, and that it was prophetic of the future fortunes of his dearly beloved son; but no kindness, no modification of the good old man, could restrain the passion which rankled in the bosoms of his children—they envied and they hated him the more.

Envy, if it be confined to the bosom

of its possessor, is confined by a stark necessity, and only wants an opportunity to burst into a devouring flame. This opportunity was soon afforded to the sons of Jacob. It appears they had gone down to a distant part of the country to procure pasturage for their flocks; and having been some time from home, their father became anxious for their welfare, and resolved on sending Joseph to *see whether it were well with them, and to bring him word*. No sooner was the thing proposed, than ~~the~~ dutiful and ready youth is prepared. *Hare am I*, was the expression of willingness, with which he receives his father's message; and elated, no doubt, with the expectation of meeting his brothers, he bounds over the *vale of Hebron*, to Shechem, where they were used to feed their flocks: but, lo, they are not there! The disappointment, however, is no abatement to his youthful ardor, and he wanders about in anxious search of

them; anxious, indeed, he must have been, so anxious, it seems, that it was visibly depicted on his face, for the first stranger that he meets, accosts him with this question, *What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren; tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks?* The man then tells him, that he had heard them say, *let us go down to Dothan*, a place eight or ten miles still distant. Such intelligence had damped any spirit less ardent than that of Joseph; but far different with him; without waiting to coldly calculate on the danger or the difficulty of such a journey, he pursues his course, duty to inspire him, and hope in the God of Israel for his safety and success.

And here we might infer an example for every minister of the gospel to follow, for their case is parallel; they also are entrusted with a message from the father to their brethren; no disappointment must dishearten them—no danger

must retard—no difficulty must damp their zeal: duty, too, must urge them on, and innocency of life, and trust in God, must be their support and assistance. Not satisfied with carrying their inquiries to Shechem—to the place of usual resort—the sanctuary of God—but to the houses of the wretched and the wicked—even to those who are most distant from their father's house, and, like the poor prodigal in the parable, are in the far country of error and of wickedness. But to return to the story.

Having arrived at Dothan, ~~he~~ finds his brethren, who discern him afar off; but how different are the sensations which pervade his bosom, and the bosoms of his brethren; his, dilated with pleasure and glowing with affection—theirs, swollen with envy and burning for revenge. Taking advantage of the loneliness of the place, they immediately counsel together to put him to death. *Behold this dreamer cometh, come let us*

slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him.

Just Heaven! what complicated crime is here! falsehood and deceit, treachery and murder, all combined. This is the spirit of envy ranging for revenge, and against its dread malignity, nor youth, nor virtue, nor innocence, are any protection, and blood, it is determined, shall wash away their father's preference.

Oh, wrath unnatural! Oh, abject baseness! Oh, cruelty unparalleled! to conspire the ruin and death of their young brother—that brother, tender, confiding, and unprotected; in a moment, too, when he was performing towards them an act of affectionate kindness—when he was the glad herald of their household's weal—the ready messenger of their father's love! Fortunate for them, the hearts of all were not so deceitful and so desperately wicked. Fortunate for them, the canker-worm of envy had not eaten so deeply into

the bosom of their elder brother; for, when Reuben heard their intention, he seems to have been shocked, and *said, let us not kill him; shed no blood, but cast him into this pit, and lay no hand upon him.* This he planned, as we learn from the historian, *that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.* Either compelled by the authority, or urged by the persuasion of their elder brother, they consent to leave him to die in the pit. Vain and detestable subterfuge! And by this, it seems, they thought they should be innocent of his blood; and so thought Pilate, when he washed his hands in the sight of the multitude, after having basely consented to the death of our holy and innocent Redeemer. But God, *who knoweth the secrets of the heart,* is not to be mocked with such evasions; and had they left their brother to perish in the pit, they were as guilty, as if their murderous steel had drank his inof-

fensive blood. Oh, let us beware, my brethren, of thus paltering with the conscience, *deceiving our own selves*. The eye of God searcheth out the matter, and his determinations are not regulated by deeds alone; he writeth the counsels of the heart in his divine judiciary—to do, and to cause to be done, are the same; and St. John hath told us, that in the cognizance of the Judge eternal, *he that hateth his brother is a murderer*; and, if we may judge from the brethren of Joseph, he that envieth his brother will soon hate him.

Having resolved on this iniquitous design, *they cast him into the pit*, and then, without any repugnance—without any feeling of remorse, they sat down as usual to eat bread. In the meanwhile, a company of Ishmaelitish merchantmen, returning from Gilead, whither they had been to purchase spices and perfumes, came in sight. In a moment, covetousness, that vampire of every vir-

true, and every obligation, put it into the heart of Judah, to make a gain of his devoted brother, *and Judah said unto his brethren, what profit is it, if we slay our brother, come let us sell him to the Ishmaelites*; and then, to make a virtue of what his sordid heart had devised, he urges a reason he never cared for until it served his interest and convenience—*and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother; and his brethren were content.* Thus resolved, the price is soon agreed upon—a few pieces of silver are paid—and Joseph, the fond, the affectionate, the beloved son of Israel, is delivered into the hands of strangers, to be removed far from the caresses and indulgences of his father, and condemned to the toils and hardships of a bond-slave.

Had Reuben still been present, he might have again rescued his persecuted brother, and saved him from such an ignominious lot; but it appears some occasion had at this time separated him

from the rest of his brethren, and taking advantage of his absence they concluded their wretched bargain. As soon as a favorable opportunity offered, Reuben returned to the pit, to rescue the devoted Joseph, and *behold he was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes, and returned to his brethren, and said, the CHILD IS NOT, and I, whither shall I go?* Throughout this transaction, there is an air of sincerity and brotherly regard in the conduct of Reuben that removes from the mind all imputation of blame; the anxiety he at first exhibits for his brother's life, the stratagem to which he has recourse for his preservation, and the anguish he expresses at not finding him in the pit, all combine to excite our admiration, and engage our love. *The child is not, and I, whither shall I go?* But this lamentation and bitter mourning no way affects the depraved minds of his brethren; we hear of no sympathy, no condolence, no compunction.

Pretending to be ignorant of the matter, their only care is to escape detection, and to evade the inquiries of the bereaved father. One crime is the stepping stone to a second; they who can perpetrate a murder, will not hesitate to utter falsehood; they who could consent to the death of an innocent brother, will not scruple to deceive a parent. There is a meanness and servility in vice, which is only to be outdone by its shamelessness; no artifice is too contemptible to be practised by the hand of treachery. Accordingly, we see these unnatural men having recourse to the wretched subterfuge of dipping their brother's well-known coat into the blood of a kid, which they killed for that purpose; and then, with the unblushing forehead of hardened crime, taking it to their father, with an open and unfeeling lie, *this have we found, know now whether it be thy son's coat or no?* The scheme answered their wishes—the venerable

father immediately recognized the torn and bloody coat, and, overcome by the sight, burst into a paroxysm of grief—*It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces; and Jacob rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son many days.* And, Oh! where is the bosom so cold and desolate that would not share the sorrow of such a father? Where is the stony heart that would not melt at the sight of the good old man, as he wept sore and would not be comforted? But who endeavoured to assuage his grief? *miserable comforters were they all!* and here, in a moment, our pity changes into indignation. It is observable that vice gradually destroys all traces of tender feeling in the heart, curdles the “milk of human kindness” into *the gall of bitterness*, and heightens the wrath of man into the ferocity of an *evil beast!* And here it is displayed, by these unnatural children, who cared not

in what misery, their shocking story might involve their unhappy father, so long as it served to conceal the truth; and then, the historian tells us, *They rose up to comfort him*. Shameless insult! that men could be so deliberately base to offer their vile dissembled condolence, force the unnatural tear, and put on the appearance of pity! *O my soul come not thou into their secret; for surely their anger was fierce and their wrath was cruel.*

But where is Reuben all this while? the sincere and noble-hearted Reuben, that he should suffer such a work to prosper? Where was virtue gone, that she did not inspire him, to snatch with fearless arm the cloak from guilt, and lay this treachery bare? Alas! he was *unstable as water*; but whether he became an accomplice in this detestable fraud, I know not; the Scripture saith not—God knoweth; but this I know,

that it is not impossible, for *evil communications corrupt good manners*.

The instability stamped upon the character of Reuben, by the well known prophecy of Jacob, leads me to this conclusion ; that the love of virtue possessed his heart, we know, but he seems to have wanted courage to support it. To this want of resolution perhaps we shall do right, in attributing his silence upon the present occasion. He knew the treacherous disposition of his brethren, and might have feared to disclose their crime, lest they should implicate him, or lest he should become an object of their fierce and unprincipled revenge.

Here will I pause, until, by God's permission, we shall again meet together, to consider the rest of the acts of Joseph, and all that he did ; his charity and virtue, his wisdom and honor, his filial love and brotherly, with all that befel him in the land of Egypt, and how that

God shewed him mercy, and made him to prosper in all that he did. Events which are chronicled in the word of God for our instruction, and in the Book of God's remembrance for his reward.

But I cannot dismiss you, without pointing out the relation in which this patriarch stands to our Blessed Redeemer, in that part of his history which has now passed under our review. He also was the dearly beloved son of the Father; and he deigned to call us brethren. Was Joseph envied by his brethren? So was Christ; *for when the Jews were clamorous for his death, Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered him.* Was their malice heightened against Joseph, because he foreshowed his future greatness? So it was against Christ. *We found this fellow perverting the nation—saying, that he himself is Christ, a king,* was the accusation of the infuriate multitude; and when, at the

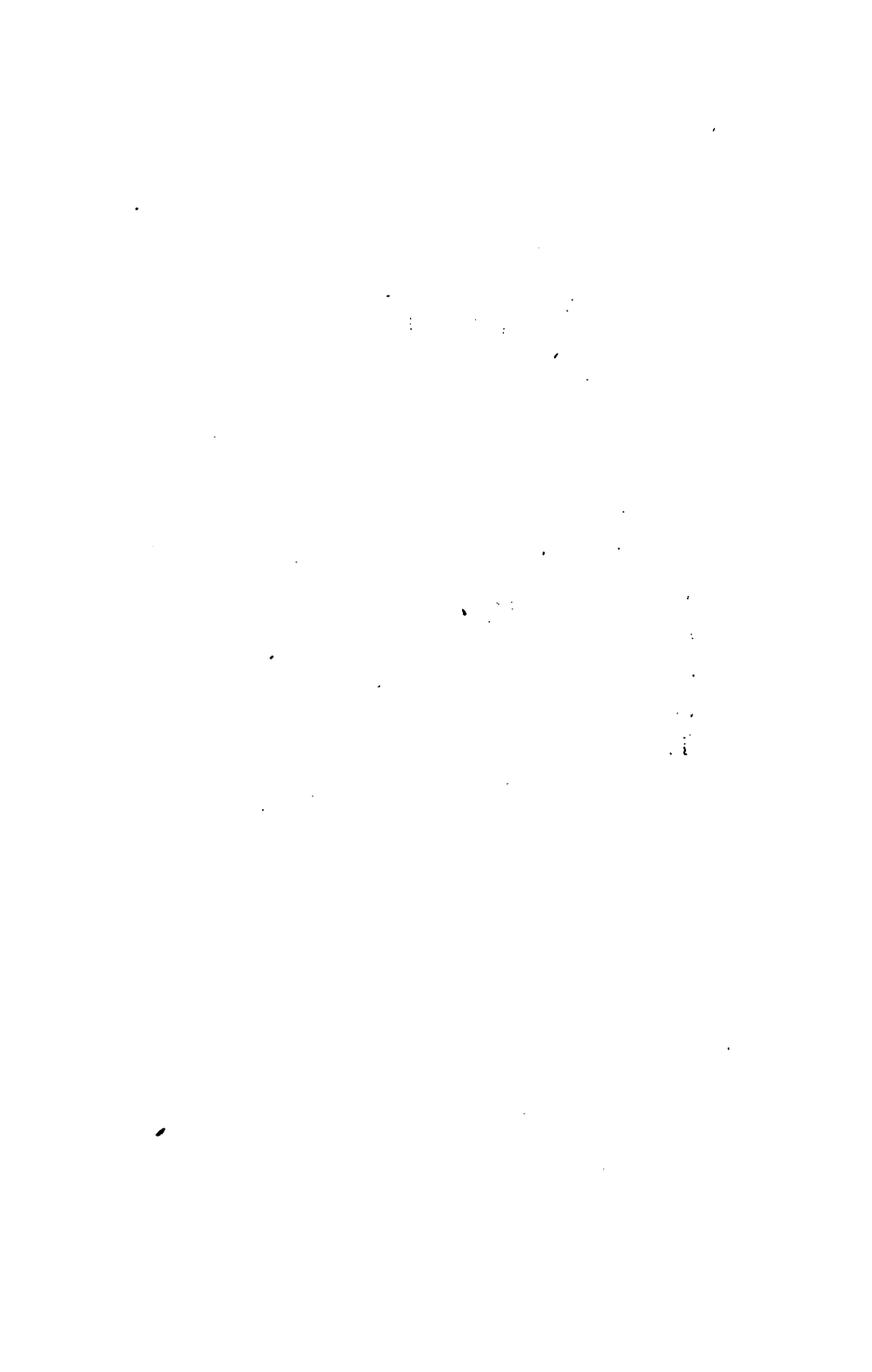
solemn adjuration of the high priest, he prophesied of his future glory, when *the Son of Man should come sitting at the right hand of power*, the high priest rent his clothes, declared it blasphemy and they all consented that he was *guilty, of death*. Was it covetousness that tempted Judah to propose the sale of Joseph? So was it the same covetousness that instigated Judas to betray our blessed Lord into the hands of his murderers, and for the self-same recompense, a few pieces of silver!

This relation, his being an eminent type of the world's Redeemer, Jesus Christ at once exalts Joseph in our esteem; and while it adds lustre to his character, it also adds weight to his example. Let us then, beloved brethren, be careful to study, and diligent to frame our lives and conversations by it; and he, *the shepherd of Israel, who leadeth Joseph like a sheep*, shall uphold us in

every danger, strengthen us in every temptation, and finally lead us to the fold of everlasting rest, there to *make us kings and priests to God and the Father. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*



LECTURE II.



LECTURE II.

PSALM cv. 17, 18.

He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant. Whose feet they hurt in fetters, he was laid in iron.

VIRTUE in distress, and persecuted innocence, seldom fail to strike the finest chords of human feeling, and awaken the tenderest sympathies of our nature. There is a charm in such a theme, against which no temper is altogether proof; even vice—hardened vice, might bow to its influence, and be melted with the recital of those sanguinary deeds, in the practice of which there was no repugnance, for it hath softened men of iron mould, “and wrung the involuntary tear from eyes unused to weep.”

Of this peculiar nature, is that part of Joseph's history, at which we closed our

last lecture ; for, methinks, it is impossible to produce a scene more deplorable and pity-moving than that in which we see this gentle and inoffensive youth snatched from the endearments of his indulgent father, and consigned to the thankless drudgery of a bond-servant ; cut off from all communion with the worshippers of the true God, and accompanied with aliens !

But no adversity, however sharp, could damp the ardency of Joseph's spirit, touched as it was by the coal of inspiration ; hosts of troubles, with all the corrupt doctrines and vicious practices of the Egyptians, were impotent to crush his stubborn virtue, armed as he was with faith in the God of Israel ; for virtue, that gem of heaven, like its most precious representative in the earth, shines brightest in the shade. Desolate and forsaken as the youth appeared, there was still one who did not desert him in this ex-

tremity ; and notwithstanding his afflictions and his bonds, still (as the historian tells us) *the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man*. Being placed immediately under the eye of Potiphar, the captain of Pharoah's guard, for *he was in the house of his master* (probably a personal attendant), it was impossible that the integrity and superior gifts of Joseph should escape his notice, for he seems to have been a man of prudence and discernment ; and thus it was, that even the Egyptian officer clearly perceived that *the Lord was with him, and that which he did, he made it to prosper*. What time he remained in abject bondage we are not precisely informed ; certain, however, that it was not very long before *the Lord shewed him mercy, and gave him grace in the sight of his master*. So true it is, that our beneficent Creator, although he may permit his servants to suffer affliction, to try their faith, or perfect their love, and serve the dispensations of his providence—yet, so

long as they put their trust in him, he will *never leave nor forsake them* altogether; and in the end will reward them double for all that they have endured. God can and hath made *bare his holy arm* to those who knew him not; for where he is there is honor, however dark and unpromising may be the prospect. So it was with Daniel when in the Babylonian thralldom, *the king preferred him above all the presidents and princes because he saw that an excellent spirit was in him*, for it was the Spirit of God; and for the same reason *the king delighted to honor* Mordecai, who, from being a pensioner at the palace gate of Ahasuerus, was advanced *above all the princes that were with him*, and became the light and gladness of his people; and in like manner Joseph found favor with his master, and *he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand*. To do good and to minister justice to all men, is the boundless latitude of the Christian religion; but God is especially

pleased when virtue is rewarded, and his faithful servants honored. Accordingly, he is not content with lifting up the unfortunate Joseph from adversity, but blesseth his benefactor for the deed, *and the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord was upon all he had in the house and in the field*; a circumstance, recorded no doubt for our encouragement, to *do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith*;* for notwithstanding *their* inability to make any return, they have an everlasting chancellor above, who is rich in mercy to him who sheweth mercy, and emptieth the full horn of his bounty upon the liberal soul—and *he who soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully, for the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*.† Thus prospered by the Lord, and daily exhibiting marks of wisdom and

* 2 Cor. ix. 6. † Psalm cxlv. 17.

integrity, he advances in the esteem and confidence of his master, until every thing—all his riches—and all his possessions, are entrusted solely to his care; and the Egyptian captain, assured of his undeviating honesty, cared not to keep any account against him—and *he knew not ought he had, save the bread that he did eat.* There is a loveliness in virtue that attracts esteem though it be clad in poverty—there is a nobleness in virtue that commands respect though it be fettered in servitude—and there is no situation in life so destitute and forlorn, but that *the integrity of a man's heart may guide him* to happiness and to honor. It was this integrity, aided by that blessing of God which is never wanting to the upright, which won for Joseph the confidence of his master; and remote as the period now is, and distant the country in which it happened, there beams upon my heart a ray of unaffected pleasure, as I survey the rising

fortunes of the youth, and mark them starting from obscurity, like the sun in glorious majesty from his cloud-confined light ! and who would not exult, and who would not feel pleasure with me ? What a change of circumstance was here ; he who, but a short time since, was despised, and stripped, and sold for a few beggarly pieces of silver, is highly valued, and clothed with honor, and made the treasurer of much riches ; and he, who lately torn from his kindred and consigned to ignominious vassalage, now finds a friend in the captain of Pharoah's guard, and is made lord over all his household !

But neither innocence nor prosperity are proof against the shafts of trouble —indeed, they serve rather to lay the bosom bare ; for innocence frequently invites wickedness to take hold on its possessor, and prosperity too often inclines us to take hold on wickedness. To the first of these evils we find it was the

lot of Joseph to be exposed, while the latter may have operated strongly on the guilty passion of the Egyptian's wife.

For now we come to a part of Joseph's history, which, from its peculiar nature, has often been deemed offensive to modesty—but I hold that there is nothing wrong, or objectionable, in that which is intended to exalt virtue and degrade vice, which yields to the one the meed of unqualified approbation, and invests the other with its severe and well merited opprobrium; and it is a circumstance too honorable to the character of Joseph, and too excellent a lesson for youth, to pass unnoticed—however unimproved. The indelicacy consists not in the relation of crime, but in its commission—in the transgression of God's law, not in the proclamation of his judgment. *To the pure, saith the Apostle, all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, because their mind and*

*conscience is defiled.** God Almighty send to all such the spirit of repentance, and make this an instrument to them of accusation and conviction.

And it came to pass after these things— after the repeated proofs of the youth's integrity, and the repeated tokens of his master's favor, *that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph*, and, prompted by a wretched passion, conceived, as we may reasonably suppose, in the "beauty of his person," she invited him to the sacrifice of his honor and his virtue. She must, indeed, have been a shameless and abandoned woman, to have ventured on the seduction of virtue so long tried, and so long approved. Adulteress in her heart already, *lie with me* was the solicitation of the faithless wife; but, as we should expect, *he refused*; and the manner of his refusal is the lasting specimen of generous feeling, manly for-

* Titus i. 15.

titude, and saintly virtue. Shocked as he must have been at this base proposition, and disgusted at such an outrage on common decency, he neither forgets the respect that is due to the wife of his master and benefactor, nor his duty towards his God. Instead of reviling or blaming her, he merely pleads his own obligations; and, as would seem, by the artful manner in which he appeals to the love and confidence of her husband, he still cherished the hope of awakening her to a sense of her unworthy return for his affection, and of reclaiming her from so unchaste and wicked a proceeding. *Behold*, said he, *my master knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; neither hath he kept any thing back from me*, BUT THEE, BECAUSE THOU ART HIS WIFE. And then, to show that however strong might be this motive he had still a stronger in reserve, he produces *the shield of faith*, by which

it is given to the servants of God to *quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.* *How then can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?* Much as he scorned to intrude upon the peace of a fellow-creature—much as he shrunk from the idea of defrauding his kind and confiding master—much as he feared the rage of an abused lord, and the resentments of a violated law—much as he valued his own spotless fame, his honor, and unblemished chastity—much more he feared to incur the displeasure of his Maker; and so utterly repugnant was the commission of this crime to all the reigning principles of his heart, that he speaks of it as an impossibility—*HOW CAN I DO this great wickedness, and sin against God?* One would have thought that such a disappointment had been sufficient to quell her lawless passion, or at least to damp the expectation of success; but, no: daily she renews her importunities—

daily she uses every artifice to break the spell of virtue, and subdue him to compliance; and we may be sure there was one to flatter her address, and whisper into her ear, as erst he did into the ear of our mother Eve, well-managed lies, wherewith to deceive herself. Prompted by such a ready counsellor, daily *she spake to him*, but in vain—he not only refused to hearken to the infamous design, but shunned her presence, and would have avoided it altogether; but, set as he was over his master's household, it could not but happen that they should sometimes meet, until, at length, an event occurred that fairly ridded him of his hateful suitor, although at the forfeit of his honorable station, and the downfall of his liberty.

And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house upon business, and there was none of the men of the house there within. Jaded by continual disappointment, and spurred by

the favorable opportunity, once more she resolves to make a desperate effort—*she caught him by the garment, saying, LIE with me!* Scarce had the words escaped her lips, than, lo, he is not! and the empty air receives the last breathing echo of her infamy. Conscious of the determined passion of his mistress, and startled at the circumstances so favorable to temptation, instantly he strips the captive garment from his shoulders, and vanishes from her presence. It was nobly done, and the record of it is worthy to be engraved upon the horns of the altar; and, surely, it would shame the youth of these degenerate days, as surely, as it will be for their condemnation in that day, when *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge!* Oh, that there were still found the same strict regard to honor, to virtue, and to God, for it would rescue many a devoted victim from despair, and spare many a pang to the mother's widowed

heart, and save so many bitter tears of penitence at the last.

Surely we consider not whither we may be carried when once we give the rein to our desires—we consider not the result when we enter upon such a warfare. Let a man place himself in the situation of the person he is about to injure—let him think upon all the misery that is likely to ensue—the bitter mourning, the burning shame, and pitiless reproach—let him but consider the awful warnings of the Almighty, who commandeth even the eye to be pure, and the more awful declaration, that *they who do such things, shall not enter into the kingdom of God*. Let a man, I say, think upon these things, and, if he be not steeled to every generous feeling—if he be not destitute of every moral obligation—if he be not dead to every solemn impression, it cannot fail to produce some such prohibiting and effectual argument for

restraint, as that which burst involuntarily from the virtuous heart of Joseph—*how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* But to acquire such an ascendancy over our passions, it is necessary that we should keep continual watch over them—that we should *keep under the body and bring it into subjection,** for a vicious appetite, like a *foul spirit, goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.†* All sin is insinuating, and we are *easily beset*, and easily overcome. Guard therefore against the danger and corrupt influence of a vice, than which, sad experience teaches us there is nothing so effectual to deprave the mind, and brutalize the affections. It is against this sin that the Apostle Paul is most severe—it is against this sin that God has solemnly denounced his destruction, and in the whole catalogue of human crime, there is no sin that more

* 1. Cor. ix. 27.

† Matt. xvii. 21.

unfits the mind and affections for repentance. *The spirit will not always strive with man*, and as, in this instance, we more immediately wrestle against the spirit, he is more readily grieved, and will more readily depart, and then, what must follow the dreadful desertion, but that *reprobate mind*, which excludes hope, and is the sure forerunner of eternal death? *Flee youthful lusts*, saith St. Paul; flee every temptation to lust, speaks still louder the example of the patriarch now before us. "He who hesitates is lost," is an old proverb, and it is a very true one: the man who stays to parley with sin, has made one desperate step towards a disgraceful surrender. If we would keep the body undefiled, as a fit temple for the Holy Ghost, we must beware of the very first insinuations of impure desire, and arrest them on the threshold. If we would act up to the dignity of our nature as men, and to the holiness of

our calling as Christians—if we would spare ourselves the vexations which always accompany guilt, and the pang of remorse which always tread upon the heels of lawless pleasure—and if we would escape the appalling verdict of an after-reckoning, we must start back from the first impulse, and leave the garment of lust in the arms of temptation. *Watch and pray*, saith our blessed Lord, *lest ye enter into temptation*. Without *this* precaution, we have but little ability to *lay aside the sin that doth so easily beset us*—without *this* precaution, not even Joseph had been able to withstand the evil day.

I know not what must have been the feelings of the deserted adulteress, thus humiliated to the last degree; but her subsequent conduct proves they were by no means enviable. Had there been one spark of honor remaining, the pre-eminence of Joseph's virtue might have kindled it into life, and restored her

again to duty and affection. But what will not vice? When once we enter upon the commission of it, we give ourselves out of our power—we give the helm to the adversary, and we are turned about whithersoever he listeth. Thus, at once assailed with lust, and pride, and disappointment, not long she hesitated; forth from their dragon seed, up sprung Revenge, like an armed giant, to seal her infamy with blood. The deserted garment favored her resolve, and she accuses the stainless Joseph of a crime, which, he had shown to her, his righteous soul abhorred. Masking herself in the grossest hypocrisy, and under the pretended agitations of offended honor, she sets up the hyena-cry of distress, and claims the attention of her astonished household; SEE, *he hath brought an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me, to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice; and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my*

voice, and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. So ready is falsehood to aid the commission of every crime; and no wonder, since he who is the author of sin, is also *the father of lies.** Having succeeded thus far, she lays the garment by, and awaits the arrival of her lord; to whom, with the same artfulness, she repeats her complaint, and, as we might well expect, *his wrath was kindled.* To be thus abused, and by one, on whom he had conferred so much confidence and favor—by one, who, from being his legal bond slave, he had raised to an office of trust and a post of honor—by one, who had always worn the garb of superior virtue, and who even appeared to be the avowed favorite of heaven. To be thus abused, and by such a person—the sense of so high an indignity, of such base ingratitude, and such deliberate treachery,

* John viii. 44.

might well have called forth his fiercest anger, and provoked him to the severest punishment. Now the inflexible integrity of Joseph, the simplicity of his nature, and the evidence of the divine favor which his master had observed, might have raised a doubt as to the truth of such an accusation, had it proceeded from any other tongue than hers, for whom, nature, honor, virtue, all combine to claim a favorable hearing, and where all the tender endearments of connubial love forbid us even to cherish a suspicion. This over-mastering influence, added to the plausibility of her story, banishes at once every other consideration. Deaf to all appeal—every opinion—every feeling gives way, and the unhappy Joseph is degraded from his well-earned honors, and consigned to the gloom and hardships of a dungeon! where, *his feet they hurt in fetters, and the iron entered into his soul.* Unhappy, said I? Unhappy! the heart-

less adulteress, with all her show of innocence, though resting on the lap of indulgence, and feeding daintily upon all the luxuries of life, might have exchanged with the prison-bound son of Israel for advantage ! For what are all the pleasures of the world, when mingled with agitations, and the compunctious visitings of a guilty conscience ? What is honey if it be sweet only in the mouth, but like the roll in the Apocalypse, it turn to bitterness in the belly ? All other sorrows are comparatively light and easy to be borne, but this we can neither wrestle with nor elude ; *the spirit of a man*, saith Solomon, *will sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit, who can bear ?* While we are blest with tranquillity within—with *a conscience void of offence towards God and man*—the arrows of affliction may strike, but they cannot harm—they may threaten, but they cannot subdue. Witness the lions in the den of Babylon, divested of their

natural ferocity, and turning the play-mates of the prophet; and the raging furnace of Nebuchadnezer converted to a temple for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to hold communion with their God! Beside, to the righteous, there are pleasures in reserve, which the wicked can neither feel nor apprehend. Witness the first Christians, in the midst of persecutions—nor prisons, nor pains, nor death, could damp their ardor, nor bend their dauntless spirits. Inspired by that strength and comfort from above, through which St. Paul declared he could do *all things*, martyrs in ecstasy have breathed out their souls in blood and flame; and the same St. Paul, with Silas, his companion in affliction, once on a time, did make the prison walls of Philippi to echo with their songs of praise. Nor does the Almighty ever forsake his faithful servants. We see him in this instance of their imprisonment, shaking the foundations of

the dungeon, and miraculously breaking their shackles, in order to recommend them to the favor and kindness of the keeper. And so it was with Joseph; the same gracious God, who once shut the lions' mouths, and walked with his servants in the midst of the fire, and encouraged his martyrs to *resist unto blood*, and won the jailor of Philippi for Paul and Silas, the same was with Joseph, as it is written—*The Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison; and the keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.*

Leaving him thus immured within the walls of a dungeon, cast down, though not forsaken, here let us again pause over the history, observing, as we pass, the analogy, which even in this part of his life, there subsists with that of our

blessed Redeemer, of whom (as I before noticed) he was so eminent a figure. He too was tempted, and he also overcame, *leaving us*, in this, as in every thing else, *an example that we should follow his steps*.*

Nor is the way by which Joseph obtained this victory unworthy our especial application. Like the Psalmist, *he set the Lord always before him*,† and acting alway as in his immediate presence, it was impossible that he should commit any *great wickedness*. *The fear of the Lord*, saith the wise man, *is the beginning of wisdom*—the beginning of religion. It is in the absence of this fear, that men fall into evil; for, were we to cherish an habitual remembrance of God's sacred presence, we dare not—should not—could not—offend him; if, in the hour of temptation, we could reflect that we are acting in the sight of one who is jealous of

* 1 Peter ii. 21.

† Psalm xvi. 8.

his honor—of one, who is constantly taking note of our proceedings—and that, in his recognition, every misdeed is filling up the measure of our eternal doom, how would it paralyze the arm of guilt, and smite the heart intent upon wickedness!

And let no man deceive himself with the hope, that a God of Holiness will, in any wise, look favorably upon iniquity, much less upon that crime which defiles the body which he hath consecrated for his especial dwelling place—as the *temple of the Holy Ghost*.*

Know ye not, saith St. Paul, inspired with indignation against this crime, *know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.*† And, in another place, to show at once the enormity of the crime, and the

* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

† 1 Cor. vi. 15.

certainly of its retribution, he saith—*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.** Nor let any man flatter himself, that the temptation of his passions will be a sufficient excuse, in that strict and fiery inquisition, which shall one day take place before the judgment-seat of Jesus. If we are endued with that faith which alone will pass current there, and which alone can entitle us to the salvation purchased by our Judge, we shall not fail in the day of trial; neither *the lust of the flesh, nor of the eye*, will be able to draw us away from that which is good, or entice us into that which is evil.

For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.† It was by this glorious and invincible weapon, that Joseph foiled the attempt of the aban-

* 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

† 1 John v. 4.

doned adulteress. The same weapon hath shielded the servants of the Most High, in the time of trial and of danger ; and it also served our spiritual and everlasting Joseph, even our Redeemer, to *withstand the fiery darts of the wicked* one, when he essayed to tempt him in the wilderness.

The same buckler of defence is offered to us all ; ours be the fault if we use it not, and most surely ours will be the punishment. For Joseph was a man of like passions as we are, and yet he triumphed ; and so was our gracious Redeemer, and yet he *was without sin* : and God, in the plenitude of his mercy, and in compassion to human weakness, hath especially promised that our trials shall not exceed our strength—*God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear*



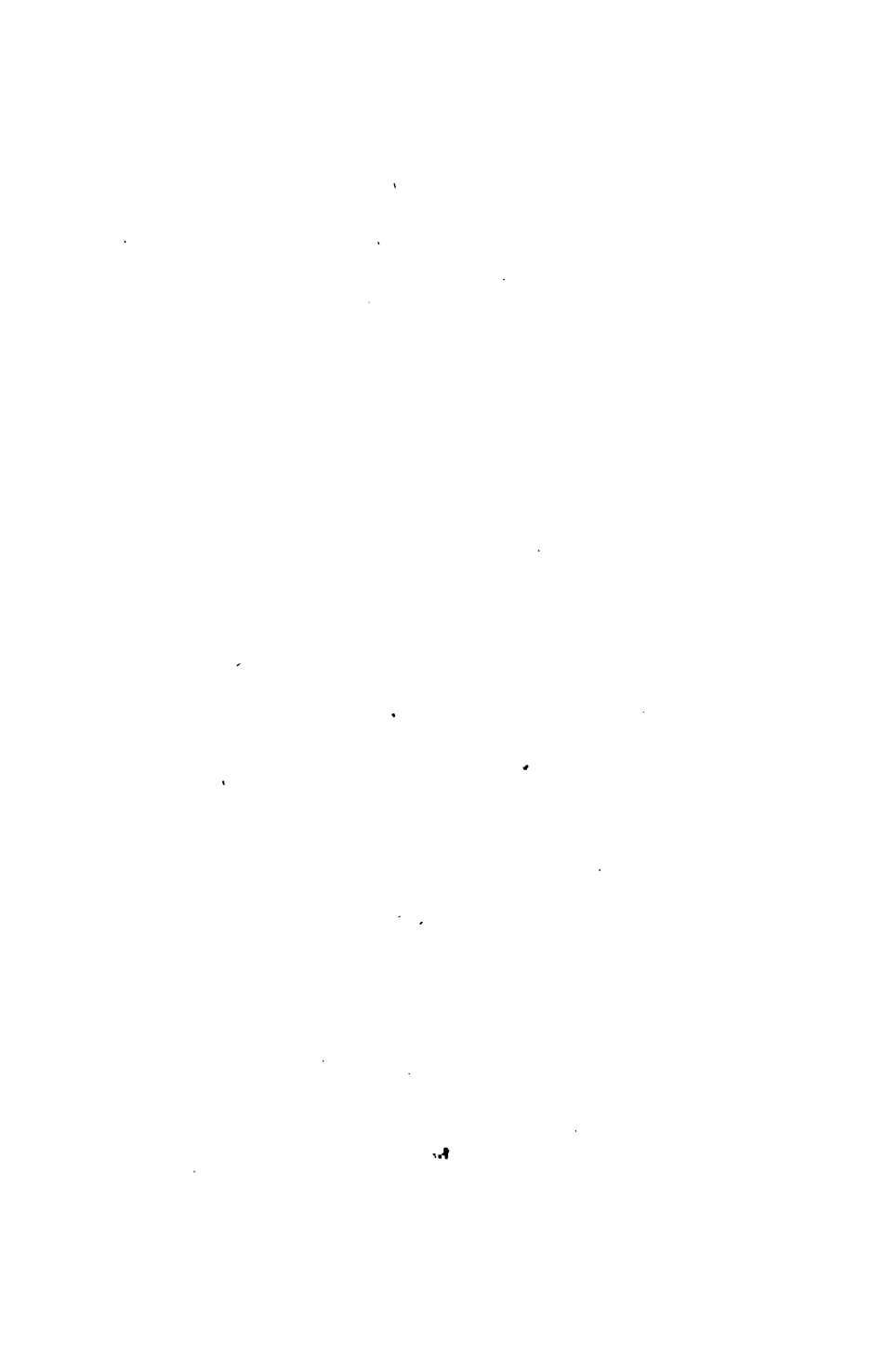
*it.** While, at the same time, we have his solemn assurance, that all aberrations from purity are sin, and that their termination is in misery and ruin—

When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.†—Now to Him who *is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*—The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory and honor, and blessing, and thanksgiving, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

† James i. 15.

LECTURE III.



LECTURE III.

Acts vii. 9, 10.

But God was with Joseph, and delivered him out of all his affliction, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt ; and made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

DARK and mysterious are the ways of Providence ; so dark, as to evade the search of human eye, and so mysterious, as to exercise the faith of the most distinguished of the saints. But, amidst all the secret operations of God's government, while his paths are in the great deep of unrevealed wisdom, and "*his ways past finding out,*" this one truth at least we know—That *all things work together for good to them who love him,** and walk in his commandments.

* Rom. viii. 28.

If this life were to complete the journey of the human soul—if the seal of death were never to be broken, and the stone from the door of the sepulchre never to be rolled away—then, indeed, we might be led to deprecate many of the decrees of the Almighty, and it might astonish us, that we should ever see his holiest servants in trouble and adversity. But Revelation hath made us wiser, in teaching that the career of *mortality* is but a race, in which the prize of immortality is to be won—that the life of man is but a short state of trial and probation, to fit him for the enjoyment of a better and more exalted nature; so that affliction itself is thereby converted into a blessing, and *happy is the man whom God correcteth*, for we know, and are assured, that *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every soul whom he receiveth*.* Even things in the natural

* Hebrew xiii. 6.

world require to be purified before they are perfect in man's esteem. Gold must be proved in the fire before it is suitable to compose the vessels of the kingly table, and the diamond, with all its lustre, must be polished by the rough hand of the refiner before it be worthy to shine in the regal diadem ; how much more, then, does man require to be tried *by the fiery ordeal* of affliction and temptation, before he be an approved vessel meet for the master's use, and *worthy the crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

Thus it is, that sorrows and afflictions have been made the test of faith and saintly virtue in every age ; to this end it was that the righteous Job was afflicted and distressed, and David driven from his throne and kingdom—to this end Mordecai was neglected, and Daniel persecuted—and to this end also the whole noble army of saints and martyrs, with St. Paul at the head, accounted all their pains, and imprisonments, and deaths,

but *light afflictions*, that were to *minister to a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. While, to crown the whole, and to give an earnest of its value, our blessed Lord himself, in his human nature, was perfected through suffering, and passed from the ordeal of human misery to the unspeakable eminence of his God-enthroned glory !

Seeing that such has been the un-deviating rule of Providence, we need not wonder if sometimes the wicked seem to prosper, while the righteous appear to be forsaken ; and it is no great matter of astonishment that the base and injurious wife of the Egyptian should escape, unblamed and unsuspected, while the bright name of Joseph is sullied by her treachery, and his person consigned to a common prison as a faithless ingrate and a disappointed adulterer !

But virtue, however it may be trampled upon, is not so easily crushed, but like the aspiring palm grows stronger by the pressure ; and misfortune, which

tends to cast down and distract the wicked, serves only for a shade, on which the glory and *beauty of holiness* may shine the brighter. Without murmuring or repining the devoted youth is put into ward; but the same Guardian Saviour, who had blessed him in his prosperity, is still his *strong hold in the day of trouble**—and visits him in the prison—and gives *him favor in the sight of the keeper*; who, soothed by the secret influence of heaven, relaxes his severity towards his prisoner. No station in life is too humble for the exhibition of virtue—no fetters can hold in durance the spirit that would glorify God—and no dungeon is so confined as to preclude the work of righteousness, and the labor of love. This Joseph knew, and so regulated his conduct, that he quickly rose in the estimation of the keeper, until, at length, having gained his friendship and con-

* Nahum i. 7.

fidence, he is made the overseer of the prisoners; which God, willing to confirm, manifests the operations of his Providence in favor of his servant—
And the keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

And now an event transpires, which the Almighty, by the secret machinery of divine wisdom, makes subservient to his designs, once more to raise the son of Israel from the obscurity into which he had been so shamefully cast. Two of Pharoah's officers, *the chief of the butlers, and the chief of the bakers*, having by some means offended him, they were cast into the same military prison where Joseph was bound, and they were commended to his care by Potiphar himself, (who, by this act of returning kindness, it would seem, began to suspect the truth of the accusation alleged against him, but, probably, was restrained from

declaring it, either by wounded pride, or the fear of bringing opprobrium upon the undeserving friend and partner of his bosom): be this as it may, certain it is, they were committed to his care; and, after they had been a season in ward, we learn, that they were both in one night visited with very remarkable dreams, *and Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and behold they were sad.* It was enough! Harshly as he had been treated by the world, it had not unstrung his heart to the vibrations of distress; throughout his trouble and ill-treatment, there was One to pity him, and the same benign Being taught him to extend his compassion to every child of sorrow. It needed only the look of sadness to awaken his benevolent feelings, and the first question is indicative of his concern — *Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?* He had their confidence, or at least their good opinion, for they immediately dis-

close the cause of their perplexity—*We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.* Gifted with inspiration, he first cautions them to remember that all prophecy and supernatural interpretation belong unto God ; and then, at once to satisfy their anxiety, and give an earnest of the *excellent spirit* that was in him, he hears the relation, and gives to each its respective interpretation, predictive of their fate ;—to the butler's, that, within three days, Pharoah would restore him to his former office and privilege ; to the baker's, that, within the same time, the king would punish him with death ; both of which, as the historian informs us, were precisely fulfilled—*On the third day, being Pharoah's birth-day—he restored the chief butler into his butlership again, and he gave the cup into Pharoah's hand ; and he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.*

Having made known to the chief

butler the grateful intelligence, he craves his remembrance, when restored to his honorable office, and brought near the king. Joseph, in all probability, had shown him much lenity and kindness while in the prison, and, being now the herald of good fortune, he claims his interest and regard in words remarkable for their modesty and simplicity—*But think on me, when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharoah, and bring me out of this house. For, indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.* In this entreaty, there is something so plaintive and ingenuous, that it seems impossible that it should fail to deeply interest the heart. One would have thought that such a request, at such a time, had roused up all the benevolent feelings of our nature, and made such an indelible impression

upon the mind of the chief butler, that, on his re-instatement in the royal favor, no means would be left untried to effect his deliverance. But, no: restored to his liberty and his office, he bestows not one kind thought upon the friend of his captivity and affliction—that friend, who, doubtless, had frequently soothed his sorrows and comforted his mourning—doubtless, I say, for it is the excellent characteristic of virtue, that she is ready at all times to dispense that consolation, of which she too often stands in need; like a kindly mother, who, regardless of her own sickly and toil-worn frame, is anxious only to supply the wants, and watch the pallid countenance, of her child. But prosperity too frequently deadens the feelings and corrodes the heart; and thus we find, that the officer of Pharoah no sooner is translated from the scene of affliction and bonds, than he forgets at once the friendless condition of Joseph, and all the obligations

that were due to him. But the Almighty forgot him not! He had not given these dreams and their interpretations in vain, nor were they sent merely to foreshow the fate of Pharoah's servants; but to minister to his Providence, and deliver the oppressed and faithful Joseph from prison and from judgment, as we shall learn from the sequel of the story.

To this intent, at the end of two years, God sent two significant dreams to Pharoah—they are too remarkable to be omitted—*Behold there came out of the river seven well-favored kine and fat fleshed, and fed in a meadow. And behold, seven other kine came up after them, ill-favored and lean fleshed, and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river; and the ill-favored and lean kine did eat up the well-favored and fat kine. So Pharoah awoke. And he slept and dreamed a second time, and behold seven ears of corn came up upon one*

stalk, rank and good. And behold seven thin ears, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears, devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharoah awoke. Two dreams so analogous—so evidently bearing upon the same subject, and which might seem to involve the interests of his kingdom, troubled the spirit of the king, and, desirous of obtaining information concerning them, he calls in the wise men and magicians, but among them all no interpreter could be found. We had wondered had it been otherwise—we had wondered to have found men, wise in their own conceits, and vain in their own imaginations, reading the mysterious doings of Jehovah. This was reserved for a worshipper of the only true God. It was a revelation sent from him—it was of a spiritual nature, and, like the gospel now, could only *be spiritually discerned.*

And now, either smitten with com-

punition for his ingratitude, or induced by some selfish motive, for the first time, the butler remembers the man, whom he never should have forgotten; and he represents to the king the circumstances which preceded his release from prison, and how truly his dream had been interpreted by Joseph. Burning with anxiety, Pharoah orders the captive to be called—*they brought him up hastily out of the dungeon*, and, having put off the sorrow-speaking garb of the prison-house, he *came in unto Pharoah; and Pharoah said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it, and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it*. No ways elated or puffed up by this honorable address, he meekly disclaims his title to praise—*IT IS NOT IN ME: the Lord shall give Pharoah an answer of peace*; and this reply agrees exactly with the direction of the Apostle, that we should *do all things to the glory*

of God. Anxious as he must have been for the favor of the king, that he might thereby be delivered from his dreary confinement, he was still more anxious for his Maker's honor—*the Lord shall give Pharoah an answer of peace!* And surely this reads a lesson to those self-righteous men, who, instead of making themselves instruments of God's glory, make God the medium of their own praise, and who exalt their doings and acquirements into a region of idolatrous pride, and forget the power which *maketh them to differ from another.**

After this flattering salutation, Pharoah relates his dreams, and Joseph read to him the interpretation—*Behold there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: and there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall con-*

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

sume the land. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharoah twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. He then proceeds to urge the expediency of selecting a man, discreet and wise, to be over the land, and to make provision during the time of plenty, for the years of necessity that were to follow, that the land might not perish through the famine. The truth of this interpretation was evident, and the thing was good in the eyes of Pharoah, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharoah said unto his servants, can we find SUCH AN ONE as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharoah said unto Joseph, forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharoah took off his ring from his hand, and put it

upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck, and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee. And Pharoah said unto Joseph, I am Pharoah, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all Egypt. And, what! is this the lightly-esteemed and grief-worn son of Israel? Is this the despised and rejected brother—the ignoble bondsman of the captain of the guard? Is this the man so lately calumniated, and persecuted, and sent to prison? Surely, O Lord, thou art with the upright, and makest the horn of the righteous to flourish! Now may we recur to his own prophetic dreams, for their accomplishment is at hand; now, at least, we behold the sheaf of Joseph standing upright, and the star of Joseph shining out on the zodiac of Israel! But let us wait awhile, and we shall see the circuitous plans of Providence re-

vealed and finished; and the rest of the sheaves shall stand round about and make obeisance, and his father and his mother and his brethren shall indeed come and bow down themselves to him! So it is, that God never speaks but it is done, for all things serve him in the accomplishment of his will, and in the dispensation of his Providence; and Joseph ~~went~~ *went out over all the land of Egypt.*

Thus exalted and endowed with princely power, how will he revenge himself on his enemies, and surely the injurious wife of Potiphar must tremble! We hear of no such exercise of his authority. No: retaliation was beneath his noble nature, for retaliation belongeth only to the puerile and base. His gentle heart too much resembled that of his gracious Redeemer to nourish anger or to seek revenge. Much as he detested the crime, he could pity and forgive the criminal; and this should be our guide in all our differences

through life. *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*

No sooner is Joseph invested with his high authority, than he gives a proof of his wisdom and discretion by surveying the land, and taking the necessary steps for fulfilling his important trust; and, as the plenty increased, he gathered in corn, and stored the granaries of Pharoah with a fifth part of the abundance; and the quantity was so great, that the historian records, that *they left off numbering the measures.*

Thus, faithful in his honorable office, he continues to increase in the favor of his royal master, who, not content with giving him a name and title expressive of his inspiration, provides him a noble alliance with the daughter of Poti-pherah, a prince or priest of On; and by her were born to him Manasseh and Ephraim, from whom sprang those two tribes, which afterwards made a prominent part of the Jewish history.

And now the years of plenty were accomplished; and they were succeeded by the most grievous dearth the land of Egypt had ever known, *and the famine waxed sore*; nor was it confined to the dominions of Pharaoh, but all the neighbouring counties shared in the visitation, and fainted because of the famine; the Egyptians only, through the heaven-directed policy of Joseph, had made provision. Looking to him as their deliverer, the Egyptians flocked to Joseph, for supplies, and *he opened the store-houses, and sold them bread. And all countries came into Egypt to buy corn, because the famine was sore in all lands.* And thus, from being a servant of no reputation, he becomes the desire of the surrounding nations, and the instrument of their salvation from famine and from death.

And here, again, we behold in him an eminent figure of *The desire of all*

nations, and the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.†* To testify of Jesus—to prefigure his character—and foreshow his coming, was the great end of all God's dealings with the fathers in olden time, and all his revelations to the children of his people—all the sacrifices of the Law, were typical of the Gospel dispensation—and all the predictions of the prophets, had a reference to its author. Among these events, distinguished by the peculiar interference of Divine Providence, none holds a more exalted place than the part of Joseph's history we have now reviewed. Before we separate, let us look what reference it hath to the once humiliated, but now highly exalted, Jesus; without whom, this story were but a tale of woe, to regale the fancy, and amuse the mind—without whom, my preaching were vain, and your attention vain also.

* Hag. ii. 7.

† Luke ii. 11.

IV. In his afflictions and imprisonment, Joseph suffered not justly, but was made the victim of false accusation, and bare the punishment due to a wretched sinner. And was it not the same with Christ? *For many bare false witness against him;* and it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief. When he made his spotless soul an offering for sin;† and suffered, as St. Peter saith, the just for the unjust.‡*

II. In his dungeon, which is the grave of liberty, Joseph was doomed promiscuously to mingle with the wicked—the transgressor of the law, and the rich—Pharoah's cup-bearer, and the master of his household! The same was prophesied of Christ—*He made his grave with the wicked, and the rich in his death;§* and we all know it was accomplished, for he was crucified between two

* Mark xiv. 56.

† Isaiah liii. 10.

‡ 1 Peter iii. 18.

§ Isaiah liii. 9.

thieves, and buried in the sepulchre of the rich man of Arimathea!

III. Were sufferings and sorrows made the road to Joseph's power and exaltation in the kingdom of Egypt? By the same road THE MAN OF SORROWS was conducted to glory in the everlasting kingdom of God. *We see Jesus, saith the Apostle, for the sufferings of death, crowned with glory and honor;** and again, he saith—*for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.†* And even the very style of his exaltation is plainly shadowed out in this history. For we read, that the king gave Joseph a name of honor, and they cried before him, *Bow the knee*, in token of submission, and he was made the supreme ruler and judge in Egypt. The same honors were in a higher sense conferred

* Hebrews ii. 9.

† Hebrews xii. 2.

on our blessed Redeemer, as the Apostle Paul declares, where, having recounted to the Philippians his humiliation and sufferings, he adds, WHEREFORE, *God also hath highly exalted him, and GIVEN HIM A NAME, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW—and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.** And our Lord himself, in his Gospel, hath told us, that *God hath committed all judgment unto the Son.†*

IV. But, in the peculiar office of Joseph, the approximation is *still* greater; for, in the midst of the famine and distress, we see him treasurer of all the store of Egypt, and dealing out bread for the support, not only of the country in which he dwelt, but to all the surrounding nations that craved his assistance. In this, the office of the Son of

* Phil. ii. 10, 11.

† John v. 22.

God, is strikingly prefigured; I speak not of Jesus, with respect to the miracles, by which he literally fed the fainting thousands in the wilderness, but as the Dispenser of the *Bread of life*—the food and nourishment of the immortal soul. And was not the famine sore when he appeared? “Not, indeed, a famine of material bread, but a spiritual famine of the word of God,” such as the prophet Amos foretold nearly eight hundred years before—*Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.** Long since we have seen the accomplishment of this prediction; with Malachi, the roll of ancient prophecy was sealed, and for four hundred years, the word of God was altogether silent. Even the store, which was laid up in the Law and the Prophets, was

* Amos viii. 2. Vide Bishop Horne’s Sermon, “The Prodigal Son.”

is corrupted by *the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees*, as to be unequal to the necessity of their own nation, for *they made the commandments of God of none effect through their traditions.** Then it was, while the land fainted by reason of the famine, that Jesus Christ, our true and spiritual Joseph, stood up and unlocked the everlasting treasury of divine wisdom; nor did he confine his bounty to his own nation. No sooner is he born, than the wise men of the eastern countries come to procure his blessing, and bring, as a tributary offering, their *treasures of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.†* The same inexhaustible store is still open to *all who hunger and thirst after righteousness*, and the same bountiful God is here, to give to every one that needeth, *without money and without price.* Continually he calls to us, my brethren, the people of this famished

* Mark vii. 13.

† Math. ii. 11.

world, to *come unto him*, that we may eat and be filled, and that our souls may live for ever. Faith and obedience are all he requires in return. Now, had the starving people refused to go to Joseph for bread, they had perished with hunger. If we refuse to go to Christ, our souls must share the same fate; for he hath declared himself to be *the living bread which came down from heaven*, which, except a man eat, he hath *no life in him*.* When the store-houses of Egypt were opened to oppose the famine, he had been accounted a fool and a mad-man to have been kept back by sloth, or any of the ordinary cares or pleasures of life; and are we not *fools, and slow of heart*, to neglect, as we are all too apt, that spiritual food, of which a man may eat and live for ever?

When the famished Egyptians cried to Pharaoh for bread, he bade them

* John vi. 48, and sequentes.

GO UNTO JOSEPH, WHAT HE SAITH TO YOU, DO. In like manner, God having made Jesus Christ *head over all things*, hath referred us to him, and to his doctrine, and he requires us to embrace his Gospel, and obey it—*What he saith to you, do*, and do it we must, or die!

But God hath revealed himself to us as a *lover of souls*, willing *that none should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life*. Continually he calls to us, but we will not hear his voice—continually he invites us to be partakers of his bounteous mercy, but we rather listen to the invitations of the world, and the most trifling cares serve us as an excuse. No chord of the human heart hath he left unstrung; he invites, that he may lead us, and if he threaten, it is only that he may persuade us to repentance—that we may *taste and see that he is gracious*; and that, having eaten of the bread of life upon earth, by walking in his precepts, and obeying his laws, we

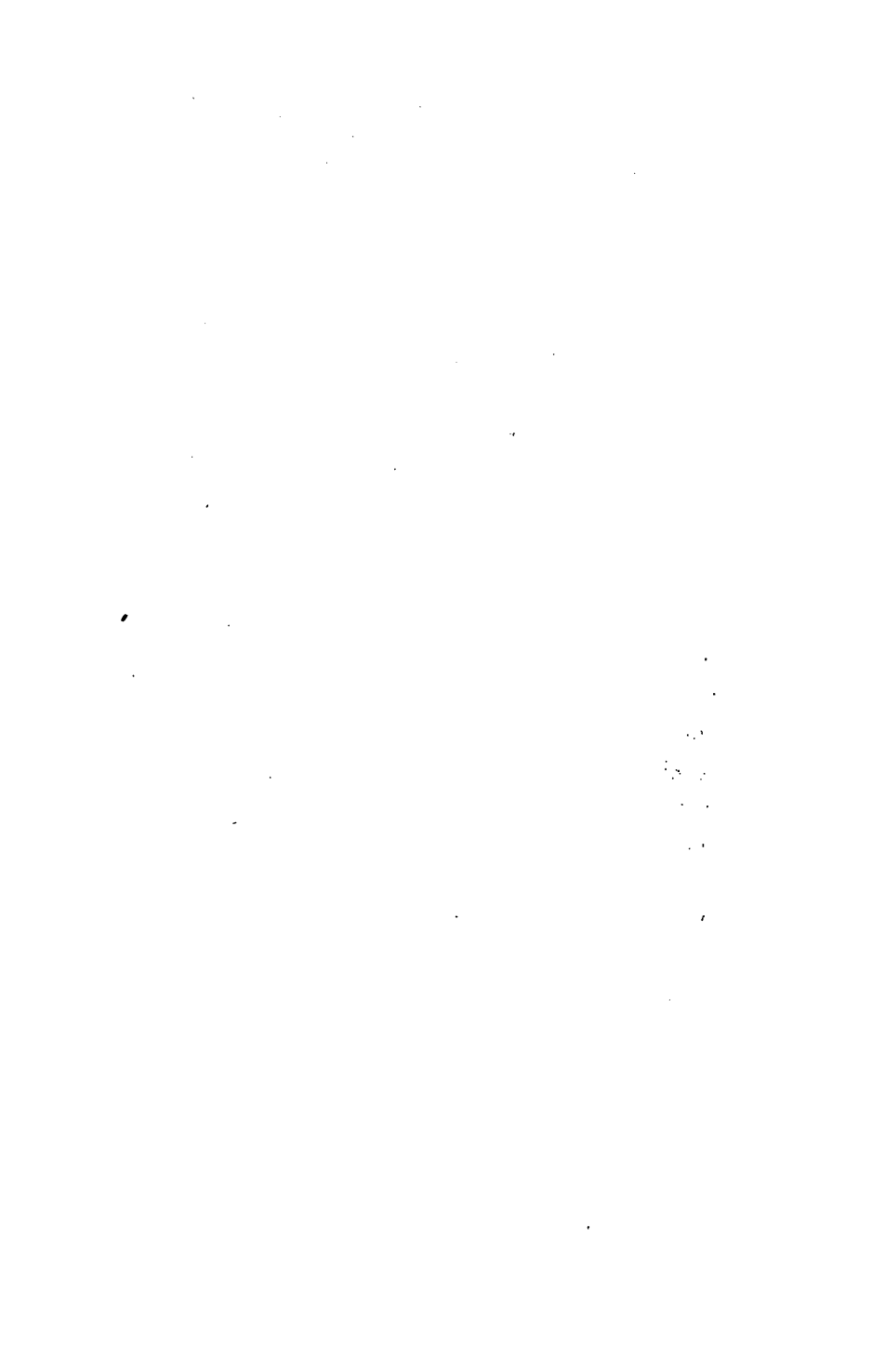
may have a right to the tree of everlasting life, by being made partakers of those excellent *things, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.** O brethren, brethren, if you have any interest in the soul's salvation, you will not slight the appointed means. If you have any generosity—if you have any gratitude, you will not harden your hearts to these powerful motives, nor shut your ears to his paternal voice, which still, in the full diapason of divine love, sounds forth the blessed assurance—*He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst!*†

Lord, ever more give us this bread, as we ascribe to Thee, in unity with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all honor, power, and salvation, for ever. Amen.

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† John vi. 35.

LECTURE IV.



LECTURE IV.

ACTS VII. 11, 12.

Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

VAIN is it for man to contend with God! As well may we strive to stay the uplifting tides, and arrest the orbs of Heaven in their bright career, as to disannul the determinations of his gracious will. No matter, what cunning we may employ—no matter, to what stratagems we may have recourse—however secret in council, and resolute in action, all is blank, and impotent to alter or impede the predestinated designs of Heaven. (*It is hard to kick against the pricks*); when man dares to lift his puny arm

in proud rebellion against the King of Heaven, he *smites with the fist of wickedness*, and it returns upon his own head, for *God maketh the wrath of man to praise him*, and he is prompt to restrain it within permitted bounds. Wickedness can succeed no farther than he allows, and while it insures its perpetrator the certain retribution, it is oftentimes made the means of crowning virtue with ultimate reward. This is a high doctrine, which the human understanding cannot span, nor the mortal eye discern, but the Gospel hath clearly revealed, and the history of Joseph hath fully exemplified it. For his brethren sold him into Egypt, that they might defeat and falsify those dreams which they certainly understood to be prophetic of this exaltation, and thereby they became instrumental to their accomplishment. Yet, let it not be thought (no, not for a moment) that there was any irresistible impulse upon the bre-

thren; nor that they were the less guilty, because the over-ruling Providence of God made their evil designs subservient to a good end—*God cannot be tempted by evil, neither tempteth he any man.* The envy and the jealousy which they had conceived against their inoffensive brother, instigated them to the commission of their unnatural crime. No fatal inspiration was upon them (it were blasphemy to assert it)—the deed was voluntary, and it was all their own. However God, in the exercise of his merciful prerogative, may bring light out of darkness, and good out of evil, it in no wise alters the color or lessens the atrocity of guilt; for he measures the intents of the heart. With him, to will, is to do—to attempt, is the same as to accomplish; and, in the final recognition, the reward will be accordingly.

In our former Lectures, we have traced the beloved son of Israel through many vicissitudes of temptation and trial,

of exile, bondage, and imprisonment; and we have seen him rising, phoenix-like, from the ruins of bodily persecution and a calumniated name, to honor and eminence, and princely power. And now, the same over-ruling Providence, which had supported him in all his sorrows and privations for nearly twenty years, determines that he shall again see his unworthy, although still beloved, brethren.

Urged by strong necessity, the inhabitants of the neighbouring nations crowd into Egypt to purchase bread, *for the famine was sore in all lands*. Not even Canaan, with all her rich and fertile vales, escaped the universal scourge; and the distress came upon the house of Israel. The report, however, of Egypt's store-houses soon spread abroad, and it was not long before it reached the ears of Jacob; for, when we really feel our wants, we are not long in discovering a remedy. It is the misfortune of too

many to be blind and unawakened to their *spiritual* necessities—to neglect the *bread of life*, and therefore perish in the midst of plenty. No sooner does the Patriarch hear that there is corn in Egypt, than he despatches his ten sons to buy from thence—but *Benjamin he sent not, for he said, peradventure mischief befall him*. Bereft as he was of his darling Joseph, it seems the good old sire had again placed the main of his affections on his youngest son. Benjamin, now, was the only remaining child of his best-beloved Rachel, and, remembering the supposed fate of Joseph, it was natural that he should refuse to trust him on so long (and it might be perilous) a journey.*

Thus commissioned, *the sons of Israel came to buy corn in Egypt: and they came to Joseph, and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the*

* One hundred miles, or thereabouts.

earth. And now the prophetic dreams begin to be realized. This action is too palpable to require any other interpretation; the bowing of their sheaves to his sheaf could import nothing else, but that the time should come, when his brethren should do him reverence—as such they understood it—as such they unwittingly fulfilled it. They had sold their brother to thwart the decree of Heaven, and their wicked devices were the means of its consummation. A circumstance that, while it exhibits the vain presumption of the wicked, serves as a warning against endeavouring to avoid any thing by unlawful measures, although contrary to our pleasure or our wishes; for, however fairly such measures may promise in prospective, they seldom fail to increase and multiply our vexation. Thus it was with the sons of Jacob.

The prospect of a brother's exalted fortune had kindled the spark of glad-

ness in generous bosoms ; and, surely, it had been no disgrace or humiliation to have paid respect to superior talent and superior worth. But Pride is a factious rebel in the human heart, and is “the head and front of all offending,” and seeing that it *was not made for man*, either to constitute his welfare or his happiness, God generally provides its mortification, as in the case before us, by *bringing down the mighty from their seats, and exalting the humble and the meek* ; for, as there is nothing so galling to Envy as being forced to acknowledge its inferiority, and nothing so consuming to Hatred as the scathing of its own fires, so, there is nothing so humiliating to the heart of Pride as constrained submission. And by this it was that God humbled the hearts of Joseph’s brethren, *and they bowed themselves before him with their faces to the earth*, in token of reverence ; at the thought of which their pride had first taken alarm, and

hurried them into various and multiplied crimes.

And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him, and he remembered his dreams that he dreamed of them. But unwilling to declare himself, until he had learned their disposition, he not only speaks roughly to them, but even accuses them of a nefarious design—*Ye are spies ; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.* Now, at this time, in Egypt, no crime was considered more heinous, and, consequently, such a charge seemed most likely to endanger their liberty and lives, for only a few years had elapsed, since the Egyptians had shaken off a yoke of bondage, and expelled her tyrants into the land of Canaan ; the remembrance of which must still have been fresh in their minds, and might cause them still to look to that country with a watchful and suspicious eye. In vain the accused brethren urge their necessity, and tell their origin—*We*

are all one man's sons: we are true men, thy servants are no spies. Not heeding their asseveration, again he charges them with a design of war—*Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come—to discover the most defenceless parts, on which to make an effectual attack.*

Learning from them, that his brother Benjamin was at home with their father, and anxious to see him, from whom he was torn away in the time of their mutual innocency, and who, as the child of the same mother, was endeared to him above all the rest, Joseph makes his pretended suspicions a plea for having him brought down to Egypt—*Hereby ye shall be proved: by the life of Pharoah ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. And he put them altogether into ward three days.* But, remembering that their detention might occasion some anxiety to their father, and distress to their families, he calls for them on the third day, and

having assured them they had nothing to fear from harsh and unjust proceedings, gives them, as a pledge, a declaration of dependance upon Jehovah—*for I fear God*—a declaration which they considered their best security. He then agrees to accept one of them as a surety for the appearance of their brother Benjamin, and bids them to *carry corn for the famine of their houses.*

There may seem something ungenial to the heart of Joseph in these proceedings with his brethren, and foreign to his kindly nature. No doubt it was; but to bind up in ointment, a confirmed and inveterate wound, is but a cheat of transient relief. The physician that would save his patient, however painful to himself, must oft-times plunge the cold steel into the quivering flesh, and cut away the gangrene. Was it not foreign, think ye, to the heart of Nathan to reproach his honored king? But there was an occasion, and a few words brought

him on his knees, in the bitterness of repentance, and with the acknowledgment of guilt—*I have sinned!** Was it not foreign, think ye, to the heart of the affectionate Paul, to make the Corinthians sorry with his letter? But there was an occasion, and we find it wrought in them *repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.*† Just such an occasion was there for the harshness of Joseph towards his brethren; they had not only offended by selling him for a slave, but they had abused their father with hypocrisy and falsehood, and all in open defiance to the indicated will of God; for the whole of which complicated wickedness they might have been but little concerned, and perhaps nothing impressed with the blackness of their guilt, for we hear of no repugnance, no contrition, no repentance. The injured

* 2 Samuel xii. † 2 Cor. vii. 1. and sequentes.

brother, therefore, seizes the present favorable opportunity for convicting them by their own consciences. How well he succeeded we may judge from the language it called forth—*And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; THEREFORE, is this distress come upon us.* There is a power in conscience, when once she hath been wounded by premeditated sin, which no subtlety can elude, or strength of mind subdue. It is true, she is not always prompt in her misgivings, and her *still small voice* is often drowned in noise, and revel, and debauch. But there are times, when we may as vainly endeavour to shun the searching eye of Heaven, as to fly from the convictions which she supplieth. Twenty years had now elapsed since they committed the atrocious deed. Conscience all this while

had slept in silence, curtained around with carelessness and ease; but no sooner did the impending danger give the alarm, than she started from her slumbers, and turned her evidence against them—*We are verily guilty concerning our brother!*

Thus they communed in his presence, not aware that Joseph understood them. No sooner did he discover the anxiety and contrition of his brethren, than the full tide of violated affection rushed into his bosom, and dissolved him into a flood of tears—it was affection, which the long absence of twenty years could not lessen, and which could not be eradicated by all the unkindness and severity he had experienced. It is true, he had spoken harshly to them, accused, and imprisoned them, and, if it were resentment, it were but just—it were, surely, but a small retribution for all the shame and sorrow to which their treachery had exposed him;

but his subsequent conduct proves he had a much higher motive—their repentance and spiritual improvement; for, when he saw them sorry, and heard their self-accusation, his nature was no longer able to contend with the restraint, all the springs of fraternal tenderness were opened, *and he turned away and wept.*

Such is the representation of the God of Heaven—he threatens us while we slumber in our sins, making *bare his holy arm*, and revealing himself to us as a jealous and avenging God; and he sendeth us affliction that he may awaken and persuade us. But no sooner doth the deep-breathing language of confession enter his ears, and the tear of penitence give an earnest of its sincerity, than he changes his aspect towards us, and, from the cloud of his displeasure, comes forth (like his emblem in the firmament) clad in the bright habili-

ments of paternal goodness—*The Father of mercies, and God of all comfort!**.

But overcome as Joseph was by fraternal tenderness, he could not but remember how resolutely wicked his brethren had once been, when no entreaty—no pity-moving anguish, could soften them into mercy; and he still seems to fear, that their grief might be nothing more than the *sorrow of the world*, excited by the impending danger. Therefore, having bound Simeon as a pledge, he secretly directs that the price of the corn be returned into their sacks, that he might prove their integrity, and *they laded their asses with the corn, and departed.*

On their way, it appears, they had stopped at an inn, to rest and refresh themselves, and one of them opening his sack to give his ass provender, *espied his money*; and when he told the

* 2 Cor. i. 3. vide Nahum i. 1—7.

circumstance to his brethren, it is said, that *their heart failed them*. Cowardice is the general concomitant of guilt, and hence the proverbial saying, trite, but no less true—"a guilty conscience needs no accuser." "It is a blushing shame-faced spirit that mutinies in the bosom of man," makes him start at every sound, and tremble at every shadow; while virtue is a stranger to fear, and shines with conspicuous nobleness in time of difficulty and danger, and so the contrast is aptly drawn by the spirit of the wise—*The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion.** Had there been no crime, wherewith to accuse themselves—had there been no punishment which they might in justice expect, they had taken refuge in the strong hold of their innocence, and considered themselves safe—but, unfortunately, it was not so with

* Proverbs xxviii. 1.

them; and THIS circumstance, added to the rest of their difficulties, they looked upon as a palpable interposition of Providence, and we hear them saying one to another—*What is this that God hath done to us?* It would, indeed, be well for us all, my brethren, did we universally adopt the same method in this particular, and, when visited with the rod of affliction, instead of referring to second causes, to apply this very question to ourselves—*What is this that God hath done unto us?* It might induce us, upon such occasions, to examine ourselves—to note our offences—and, by God's grace, lead us to repent, and to amend them.

Harassed and perplexed with these accumulated difficulties, they hasten onward, expecting (we may naturally suppose) to be apprehended for the money, which they had found deposited in the sack. On arriving in Canaan, they relate to Jacob all that had befallen them; how that the lord of Egypt

spoke roughly, and accused, and imprisoned them, and that, finally, to prove the truth of their errand, he had detained Simeon, as a pledge for the appearance of their brother Benjamin; when, to crown the whole of their misfortunes, *as they emptied the sacks, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and both they and their father were afraid; they were afraid, at the instigation of an evil conscience—he, lest harm should befall his son, who was still a prisoner in Egypt, and lest the honor of his house should be involved.*

The life of Jacob had been marked with many trials and hardships—nobly had he sustained them all; but age, at this time, must have relaxed his fortitude, and folded up the high born energies of his mind. Ill had he borne the loss of Joseph—the wound, though partially healed, was still tender—the pain was soothed, but not eradicated; and now,

the crowd of evil that gathered around him, called up the remembrance of the past—he bled and ached afresh; and, in the bitter plaint of overwhelming sorrow, he accuses the brethren, as being the authors of his misery—*Me have YE bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me.* Little as he was aware of it, this declaration was affirmation of the truth; they, indeed, were the sole authors of the affliction which seemed to threaten the overthrow of his honor and his happiness. And Solomon said well—*A foolish son is the calamity of his father.*

And here, again, the generosity of Reuben becomes so conspicuous, that we are half inclined to withdraw our censure on his former silence. Sympathizing in the extreme grief of his father, and anxious at once to solace the good old man, and induce him to consent to a measure so necessary to their

preservation as their return to Egypt, he offers his own children as a bond for Benjamin's safety—*Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.* But importunity is in vain. *My son shall not go down with you,* exclaimed the impatient sire, *for his brother is dead, and he is left alone, if mischief befall him by the way, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

Thus perplexed, and thus resolved, we leave him for a season, and pause over this division of the history, making only a brief application of the two material lessons, which we derive from that portion of it, just passing in review.

I. From the conduct of Joseph.

II. From the conduct of his brethren.

I. We learn, from the conduct of Joseph, in what manner we should behave ourselves to those who have offended, and great, indeed, is the contrast

it presents to the general behaviour of the world. Some there are who make light of our natures' failings, and make sin the subject of unhallowed mirth. But Solomon hath informed us what manner of men these are—*Fools*, saith he, *make a mock of sin*,* and fools they surely must be, for they know not the living God, who is the fountain of all wisdom, and neither do they understand his Word, *which is alone able to make them wise unto salvation*.† *When God with rebukes doth chasten man*, it is *for sin*;‡ it was sin which brought misery and death into the world—filled this life with labor, and trouble, and sorrow, and placed us on the brink of everlasting woe; and, surely, there is nothing in these things to make us merry. It was sin that offended the great and dreadful God of Heaven, and *crucified the Lord of Life*, and still grieves

* Pro. xiv. 3. † 2 Timothy iii. 15.

‡ Psalm xxxix. 11.

the Holy Spirit; and will any rational man think these fit subjects to be jested upon? Joseph thought not so when he did violence to his kindly heart, that he might prove and restore the offenders; and St. Paul thought not so, when he bade *them that were spiritual, in the spirit of meekness, to restore the brother, overtaken in a fault*;* and our compassionate Redeemer thought not so, when he wept over the devoted city of Jerusalem; and we shall not think so, when we stand upon the extreme verge of death and judgment. If, indeed, we care not to secure to ourselves a happy life, and a peaceful death, and a favorable reception with our righteous Judge—if we care not to meet the last enemy of man with terror, and remorse, and coward shrinking—if we care not to be shut out from the presence of God, and to dwell with everlasting burnings—why, then,

* Gal. vi. 1.

it signifies not how familiar we are with sin, and the faults and backslidings of those around us may be fit subjects for our scorn or merriment! A few more sallies of obscene raillery—a few more bursts of senseless laughter—and then the bitter tears of too late penitence, and the bitter pains of eternal death! It is the province of virtue, to sorrow in virtue's cause, and he is but a nominal Christian who can receive the least gratification from the failings and misdoings of a neighbour. There was a time, indeed, when such misfortunes were subjects of unfeigned concern to every community of Christians. We are not astonished to find men making a mock at the sin of others, who are desperately wicked themselves; but that Christians, *possessing the form of godliness*, should make the errors of others a subject of vain glory and spiritual pride, is an inconsistency, not to be thought of without wonder. Brethren,

such glorying is not good! Even the profligate, at least, demand our pity, for who that feels the value of the human soul, and knows how much it is esteemed by his Redeeming Lord, can avoid some emotions of sorrow and commiseration, at seeing it hasting to perdition? And who, that taketh note of his own numberless failings, and looks forward with hope for his own salvation, will not feel some desire to restore the offender? These are feelings which God loveth and approveth, and to encourage them, he hath declared by his Apostle, that he who *converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and it shall hide a multitude of sins.** But when there are any signs of penitence, it is wicked—it is unfeeling, to visit the offender with obloquy and reproach; it is a subject which awakens the glory and rejoicing of angels in

* James v. 20

Heaven, and, if ever we would join the celestial band, we must endeavour to imbibe a portion of their benevolence; always *considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted*. Such was the conduct of the righteous Joseph, when he wept over the shame and penitence of his brethren; such was the invariable practice of our blessed Redeemer through life;—whether we look to those who personally offended him, or those who had sinned against his divine commands—whether we refer to his look upon Peter, or his dismissal of the penitent adulteress, we shall find, that he *never brake the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax*. And if we would have him to plead in our behalf—if we would have him to cover our ten-thousand faults with the robe of his righteousness, we must be more inclined to extenuate a brother's faults, and more earnest to draw the veil of pity over a brother's shame—*For he shall have*

judgment without mercy, who hath shewed no mercy, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

II. We learn, in the second place, by the conduct of the brethren, how great the power, and how alarming is the call of conscience !

Be sure your sin will find you out: sooner or later—in this world, or in the world to come, it will rise up in fearful retrospect to accuse and to condemn you. When the brethren of Joseph sold him to be an Egyptian bond-slave, conscience was bribed with a few pieces of silver, and, for awhile, prosperity lulled her to sleep, and they little thought that, one day, she was to play the accuser, and to sit in judgment also; and that, too, when least prepared to meet her charge, or appeal from her verdict. But so it was, and so it will be, with every sinner, when sickness or affliction takes the veil from off the heart, and shows the blackness and deformity of guilt.

“ While we have nothing to thwart our earthly wishes, and nothing to hinder our sensual delights, while rosy health and smiling joy are the companions of the morning-tide of life, carelessly we may pursue our way, saying with Agag—*Surely the bitterness of death is past*; and prosperity clasps the heart in steel to blunt and turn aside the arrows of conviction. But no sooner does sickness seize upon the frame, and threaten the breaking up of life, than forth cometh conscience, like an armed giant, and presents the dreary catalogue of our sins, superscribed in characters that cannot be mistaken—*The wages of sin is death!* Alas! too often her kind monitions are in vain—her caution is slighted, and her threats despised. Ten times may the sinner be warned and startled, and ten times, like the miserable king that knew not Joseph,* may his heart become har-

* Exodus i.

dened, and rebel against God. So it was that Herod feared, and Felix trembled, and the Pharisees were convicted; but, lest conscience should do her perfect work, there was one at hand to bribe her to silence—with pride for Herod, and sensuality for Felix, and malice for the Pharisees. And so it is still with egregious and hardened sinners—harassed perpetually with the whips and stings of conscience (*for there is no peace for the wicked*) they fly for succour to the bewitching cup of pleasure, and so they drug and dissipate her influence, till death puts forth his hand to change the scene. Then conscience, too, shall change her office, and from being the watchful guardian of the soul, shall become the messenger of doom and woe—the ruthless instrument of sorrow and remorse—*the worm that never dieth!*

Let us, then, brethren, learn betimes the value of this inestimable friend, while she yet speaketh. Let us listen

to her voice, with the same implicit confidence, as to *the still small voice* which Elijah heard, when he wrapped his face in his mantle: and what we hear, let us be careful to mark and to obey!

The brethren of Joseph, no doubt, considered him unkind, and they might have looked upon him as an enemy; but he probed the wound only that he might effectually cure it, and the result proved him their best and dearest friend. And let this be an admonition to you, my brethren, against taking offence at your minister, when, in obedience to the dictates of his office, he challenges your offences, and tells you the truth, however contrary to nature's pride and nature's inclinations; in the end, be assured you will find him indeed your friend. Though a foe to every sin, he is a friend to every sinner!

The good and gracious God send forth his Holy Spirit into the midst of us, that no word of his unworthy ser-

vant be ineffectual to awaken the sinner's conscience ; for, if he fail, the hour is quickly coming when *the voice of the archangel and the trump of God* shall startle her from the deep sleep of death, to give her witness against the shivering soul !

From which Jesus defend us all ; and be it ours now, and eternally, to ascribe to Thee, O Holy Redeemer, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, honor, and glory, and blessing, and salvation !
Amen, and Amen

LECTURE V.

LECTURE V.

GEN. XLII. 2.

And Jacob said, behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live and not die.

MAN is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward! No forethought, no prudence, can sufficiently arm us against the host of afflictions which wage perpetual warfare with our fallen nature. They entered into the world when man broke down the barrier of a sinless obedience, and, ever since, there is no state or condition that hath not been exposed to their assaults. In vain we retire from the world, the enemy is in ambush, and lurks amid the haunts of solitude—in vain we fence our tents with care, and build our battlements with prosperity,

still trouble leapeth over the wall. Placed as we are in the world, as on a theatre of trial, the scene is perpetually changing, and few there are in which afflictions bear not their allotted part. And yet it is most true, that although no human means are sufficient in themselves to defend us from trouble, and although neither discretion nor virtue can place us beyond the reach of calamity, still most of the troubles and calamities of life spring from human imprudence and human wickedness. There seems to be an eternal chain, in which all the events of existence are invisibly and mysteriously linked together. And thus it is that we observe well-governed youth ripen into virtuous manhood, gradually decline into honorable old age, and terminate in a peaceful dismissal from the world; while, on the other hand, it frequently happens that we may trace our afflictions to the fountain head, which is sin. I say frequently, for

there are afflictions sometimes sent to the virtuous and good, not that they, or their parents, had sinned, *but that the works of God might be made manifest.** Of this, however, we are certain, had man never sinned, the hand of his Maker had never weighed heavily upon him—*For the wages of sin is death,† and the sting of death—all its pains and all its sorrows—is sin.‡* And even the affliction, which now pressed upon the hoary head of Jacob, might (without straining the righteous judgments of Heaven) be ascribed to his own folly. For who remembers not how he once collegued with Rebecca to deceive his father, and thereby fraudulently obtained the blessing, which was the birth-right of Esau, his elder brother? And now we find that, in return, he is abused by the falsehood of his own sons, and, through their treachery, he is plunged

* John ix. 3. † Rom. vi. 23. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 56.

into the extremity of distress, in which we left him with our last Lecture.

It was, indeed, a pitiable condition ! It seemed that God had smitten the four corners of his dwelling, and shivered all his household gods upon his hearth. Visited by a grievous famine—dependant upon a strange country for support—Simeon, a suspected prisoner in Egypt, as a pledge for the appearance of Benjamin, his youngest, his best-beloved child—and, to crown the whole, an imputation of treachery and fraud upon his house. But, dismal and threatening as the prospect was, the impatient sire resolutely refused to allow Benjamin to go down, to redeem the promise made to Joseph. Awhile he continued steadfast to his purpose ; but, what will not necessity ? And of all necessity hunger is the most distressing and the most urgent. Long time he struggled with his feelings, long time he shrunk from the dreaded separation ; but necessity,

stronger than all human affections, at length prevailed—*Go again and buy us a little food.* The brethren, however, had been too much alarmed by their former interview with the governor of the land to think of repeating it, without redeeming their promise and their pledge; and so they argued with their father—*The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.* Fretted with this reply, he accuses them with unkindness in making known his estate—*Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man, whether ye had yet a brother?* But when he learns that they were directly questioned upon the subject, he seems to have been satisfied with them, for he would not have had them guilty of falsehood. Judah then urges that, to save themselves and their children, it was absolutely necessary that he should comply, and having offered to become surety for him, that

he should return in safety, the good and affectionate old man reluctantly consents—and *their father Israel said unto him, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits of the land, and carry down the man a present*; by which he hoped to sooth the severity of the governor: a custom, at this day, of courtesy and respect, sometimes of reverence and submission. He then refers them to the unaccountable restoration of their money, and bids them to make provision accordingly—and *take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again, peradventure, it was an oversight*. I would to God, brethren, that we could always meet with such honesty in the world; but, alas! what a melancholy contrast is this with the daily events of life, in which we behold men straining every faculty to circumvent and defraud their fellows; but, these doings will not pass the judgment-

seat of Christ. Whatever cunning we may use to conceal our purposes from the world, there is One that *seeth in secret*, and, in the end, *will reward us openly*.

Israel having thus charged his sons, delivers Benjamin to them, with a blessing at once holy and affectionate—*God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved*. The whole of this proceeding presents us with a striking picture of a good man's conduct. Not content with being scrupulously honest, in making restitution of the money that had been returned, and which had every appearance of an *oversight*, he prepares a costly present for the lord of Egypt, as a token of respect and good will, and in the hopes of securing for his children a more favorable reception. Yet, although he leaves nothing undone that might in-

sure success, he neither trusts to human merit or human policy, but to God—*God Almighty give you mercy before the man*. Most unlike those careless and thoughtless men (and, alas! there are too many) who tempt the Almighty with their daring, and embark on dangerous enterprises without one thought of him, neither consulting his will, or imploring his blessing—most unlike such men, the holy patriarch trusts to the arm of God for safety and deliverance. Too often, brethren, we engage in what is wrong, and, too often, we fail in that which is right, and the reason is evident, because we are content to be guided and governed by our own desires, and because we look no further than to our own unassisted power; whereas we are expressly told that we can do nothing!* Let us always be assured that what we undertake is lawful

* John xv. 5.

and right, nor let us proceed without asking the preventing grace of God ; and then, in the result, whatever be our policy, and whatever be our success—*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise !*

In the exclamation which immediately follows Jacob's prayer of blessing, there is an expression, not only of pathos and tender sorrow, but of the most pious resignation to the will of Heaven—*If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.* Of all the trials he could be summoned to bear—of all the penalties that could be laid upon him, such a loss would be the heaviest, and this by sad experience he knew, yet we hear of no murmuring or repining ; an expression of desolate resignation is all—*If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.*

Thus prepared to make good their agreement by the introduction of Benjamin—to vindicate their honesty by taking back the restored money—and to

win the governor's trust and favor by a gift of homage, they again *rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph*. Rejoiced to find his brethren returned, Joseph prepares to give them generous welcome, and commands the ruler of his house to lead them to his private dwelling, and prepare a feast, intimating that they should dine with him. To be thus kindly received, and conducted to the house of the greatest man in Egypt, were marks of attention, too plain, one would think, to be mistaken, and yet we find it was mistaken, and *they were afraid when they were brought into Joseph's house*. There is a proneness in all men to judge the conduct of others by the standard of their own; suspicion is always the companion of guilt, and nothing of consequence can occur to the man, whose conscience is burthened with notorious wickedness, but it will assume a threatening aspect. Accordingly, we find the brethren of

Joseph attributing their distinction to the mysterious circumstance of their last visit—*And they were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in;* and to this foolish opinion, they add another more ungenerous and base—*that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bond-slaves.* The recollection of once having betrayed a brother to the same ignominious fate, seems to have haunted them upon every occasion, and nothing strange befalls them, but they look upon it as ominous of that punishment which, in equity, they deserved. So it was with Herod, by whose diabolical command the venerable Baptist was beheaded; no sooner does he hear of the fame of JESUS, than the ready recollection of his guilt pervades his feverish heart, and he starts back with the blank conviction of a blood-

stained conscience—*It is John, whom I beheaded—he is risen from the dead!* And so it still is with every sinner who is not altogether *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*; all things conspire to bring our misdeeds before us, and, verily, God is most merciful that he doth not leave us *dead in our trespasses and sins*; and blessed be the voice of virtue, that is not silent, and the Spirit of God, which still striveth with the wickedness of man!

Affrighted with their own suspicions, the brethren of Joseph consult with the steward of the house, and recount to him what had transpired respecting the money they had found returned; assuring him that they knew not in what manner it had happened, and that they had brought it again, to make restitution. Observing their extreme trouble and anxiety, the steward immediately replies—*Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your*

father, hath given you treasure ; he then satisfies them with an acknowledgment of the required payment, and restores their imprisoned brother to them again. Then, to put down all scruples respecting their safety, *he gave them water to wash their feet*, the first mark of Eastern hospitality, and also the most welcome, in a country, where the feet were only sandalled, and consequently exposed to dust and heat in travelling.

And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present, and bowed themselves to him, to the earth, in token of their reverence, and of the dependance of their households ; the one indicated by the present, and the other by the prostration of themselves before him. But how changed the demeanor of Joseph ! no longer rough and arbitrary, but kindly enquiring the welfare of their families, and his language upon this occasion bespeaks the generous and noble heart from which it proceeded—

Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?—No time—no absence could blot out the heart-engraven record of his father's love—not all the riches and the glory of Pharaoh's court, could make him forget the good old man, who had nourished him, and cherished him, in the happy days of youth and innocence, although now in a distant land, involved in difficulty, and reduced to want. And they answered, THY SERVANT, our father, is in good health; he is yet alive: and they bowed their heads, and did obeisance. Satisfied in this particular, the next object which claimed his attention, was his long desired brother, and *he said, is this your younger brother of whom ye spake? and he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.* A thousand happy emotions swelled within his bosom as he addressed the companion of his youthful joys; a thousand endearing recollections crowded upon his mind, as he read upon

the visage of Benjamin, the domestic pleasures and employments of former days, and they overwhelmed his heart, susceptible by nature, and refined by virtue; all the fountains of fraternal tenderness and affection were opened, and no longer able to disguise his real feelings, he retired to another apartment to indulge them.

But unwilling yet to reveal himself, (for their trial was not yet complete) *he washed himself, and went out and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.* This was done upon three tables—one for Joseph; one for his brethren; and one for the Egyptian guests, according to the custom of the country, where, in the first instance, it was necessary that he should preserve the dignity of his exalted office; and the reason why a separate table was allotted to the Egyptians, the story explains—*They might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.* The reason of this popular

superstition arose not merely from their difference in religious worship, but from the Hebrews being of the same occupation* as their old invaders, whom they had expelled into the land of Canaan, as was noticed in a former Lecture.

And Joseph took and sent messes unto them : but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.

This mark of distinction shown to Benjamin, in the presence of all his brethren, although trifling to those who CONSIDER IT LIGHTLY, had in it much of meaning and much of policy. Joseph remembered (how could he forget it?) that it was on account of the distinction shown to him by his father, that they had envied and evil-entreated him; and now, by conferring such favor and honor upon his youngest brother, he would learn whether the same spirit of

* Gen. xlv. 34.

envy lusted within them ; and how far their recent troubles had operated in bringing about a sincere repentance and amendment of life. This I reserve for part of my next Lecture.

And they drank and were merry with him. Religion, we may here observe, is not an austere master, nor does it deny us the pleasures and delights of life, so they are innocent—strictly innocent : it condemns not the wine, the music, and the feast, in their use, but in their abuse. *There is a time for all things,* saith the wise man ; and in the beautiful parable of the repentant prodigal, the good father, on his return, is represented as providing a feast, and *making merry with music and with dancing.* Religion was not given us to shackle every social pursuit, and spoil us of every social pleasure, but to pervade the heart of man with joy, and gird up the soul for active life ; and it seems to me a blind and ignorant devotion, which, to make a man holy,

would deprive him of all the recreations of life—which would require him to *hang down his head like a bulrush*, and to walk about a frowning and secluded thing. I do not see how this ascetic spirit can harmonize with the spirit of love and universal good will, and the history of our own country is a living argument to the contrary; for there never were, in any age of the church, a more proud, fierce, and revengeful people, than the puritans of the seventeenth century, who, while they prohibited a merry heart and a cheerful countenance, gave an earnest of their zeal, by desecrating and demolishing our churches—by murdering their king, and by persecuting his subjects. But while I present our holy religion to you clothed in pleasantness and peace, let it not be thought that I wish to lead you to the extreme limit of our Christian liberty; far from me be such a wish! If I am to err, I would rather it were

in restraining you even within the boundary of lawfulness, knowing, as I do, how very apt we are to go beyond it; and still less may we sanction any thing like revelry and debauch. Too often, alas! it is our unhappiness to observe men encroach upon those liberties, and make them ministers of dissipation and evil living, and their cups are crowned with drunkenness, and the blessed privilege of social intercourse is polluted with indecency and profaneness; and while *the harp, and the viol, and the wine, are in their feasts, they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.** To such works the Gospel gives no countenance; and you must remember, that no pleasures are lawful that unfit us for the offices of devotion, or the proper employments of life. If we cannot restrain our enjoyments, we must

* Isa. v. 12.

renounce them altogether; if our indulgencies degenerate into wantonness, we must deny ourselves—if they lay us under any disadvantage—if they retard the soul in her spiritual progress, and chain the affections to *things of the earth*, we must snap short the shackle at the head—*leave all and follow him*, who is our God and Redeemer!

Leaving the sons of Jacob thus kindly received and honorably noticed by the lord of Egypt, whom as yet they knew not to be their brother, I shall, for the present, break the story. But we cannot fail to notice how completely the prophetic dreams of Joseph were realized in this visit, when *the sun and the moon and the eleven stars*—his parents and his brethren—the whole household of Jacob did obeisance unto him. For although Jacob himself was not there in person, the present which he sent was an earnest of his respect and homage; and when he asked them of their father's health,

the brethren replied—*Thy servant our father is well*; and with this acknowledgment they again bowed themselves to the earth, and thereby accomplished that part of the dream which related to their father. Thus, these significant visions, which had been the cause of so much jealousy and evasion, were fulfilled—entirely fulfilled. How could it have been otherwise? God had fore-shown it, and when did he fail?

By the same spirit of inspiration it is declared, that the time shall come when we shall all pay reverence to a greater than Joseph, even to Him whom he was sent to typify; and that we shall all do obeisance before the judgment-seat of Christ, when *at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess him God!* and little as we may think of it, my brethren, every word shall be one day realized. In vain we may strive—in vain we may contend—*Heaven and earth shall pass away* before

one jot or one tittle of all that the Gospel hath declared shall fail.

Blessed the man to whom the Lord in that day imputeth no sin. Blessed the brethren to whom he speaketh not roughly, and *in whose spirit there is no guile.** Blessed, thrice blessed and happy, the man on whom, 'as upon the inoffensive Benjamin, the heart-cheering benediction shall descend—*God be gracious unto thee, my son*; or, in other words, *Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

* Psalm xxxii. 2.

LECTURE VI.



LECTURE VI.

ACTS VII. 13.

And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharoah. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred.

MANIFOLD, indeed, are the scenes and changes of this mortal life; we pass through a rapid succession of events, which are often sudden, and often unexpected: and there is no permanent estate between the cradle and the grave. This perpetual revolution of circumstances, and this utter uncertainty of all sublunary good, is wisely ordered by that gracious being, who alone truly *knoweth what is good for man*, to show us the instability and unworthiness of all earthly things, and to teach us rather to *set our affections on things above*,

which are immutable and eternal. And while it warns the prosperous of presumption and vain security, it encourages those that are cast down to hope to the end, *for we know not what a day may bring forth*. Joy and sorrow alternately pervade the human heart, and preserves that equanimity which best fits us for the ordinary duties of active life; and he who would perform those duties with propriety and faithfulness, will endeavour, like St. Paul, to *know how to suffer need*, as well as *how to abound*; and will *learn, in whatever state* he is placed, therewith *to be content*.* Many are the trials and temptations which at times beset us all—many are the troubles and difficulties to which we are all exposed—and in these emergencies nothing can effectually sustain us, but innocence of life, and sure trust and confidence in God; the one defends

us from enemies within, and the other is our safeguard against those which attack us from without ; the one is our support in the day of trouble, and the other is our strong hold and our castle !

Now had the sons of Jacob been thus equipped, the several events which befel them in their journeyings into Egypt, had not cost them so much trouble and anxiety ; but a guilty conscience, as it mars every enjoyment, so it aggravates every real trouble, and multiplies imaginary evils. Their difficulties, however, seemed to be drawing to a conclusion. The indulgence they had met with from the lord of Egypt, and the interest he had taken in their welfare, began to brighten their prospects, and *they were merry with him*. But, amidst the gaiety and feasting at the board of Joseph, they little dreamed the trials that were preparing for them, and they rejoiced in the anticipation of returning to their country in triumph,

whither they were to proceed on the following morning.

Joseph, in the meanwhile, gave directions to his servants to fill their sacks with corn, returning, as at the first time, the price of it in every man's sack; and that in Benjamin's he should deposit *the silver cup*, out of which himself was accustomed to drink. All this was accordingly done; and *as soon as the morning was light*, little suspecting any harm, and well satisfied with their good fortune, they departed. But how transient and uncertain is the happiness of man. Scarcely had they escaped the city gates, before they were overtaken by a troop of horsemen, charged with the theft, and rated for ingratitude. *Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it, in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? Ye have done evil in so doing.* Conscious of their innocence in the matter, and hurt by such an unworthy accusation, in the

language of earnest confidence, they immediately replied—*Wherefore saith my lord these words, God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing. Behold, the money which we found in our sacks we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.* The steward of Joseph seems to have understood his master's wishes; he pretends, therefore, to be anxious only for the punishment of the offender, and he said, *now also let it be according to your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.* Like men ready to be proved, and assured of their acquittal, *they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack.* Accordingly, the search began at the eldest. With exulting confidence they beheld one after

the other examined in vain; when, at last, to their inconceivable astonishment and dismay, in the sack of Benjamin, the fatal cup was found. Now, to the inconsiderate observer, this part of the story seems to detach from the bright character of Joseph, and to involve him in a species of fraud; to the diligent enquirer, on the contrary, it affords a striking example of that wisdom and policy, which upon every occasion distinguished his conduct. To the brethren, envy had been the besetting sin; envy had excited their malice against him—it had urged them to injuriously sell him for a bond-slave, and had been the cause of a deliberate deceit practised upon his honored and afflicted father; and, as yet, he had no decided proof that the same spirit did not still lurk within them. By the distinction he had shown their younger brother at the feast, he had taken the most effectual means of alarming the spirit of envy, did any vestige

of it slumber in their bosoms ; and now, by the imputation of a theft, and by the threatening of bondage, he opens to them the means of displaying an evil temper, by leaving their brother to his fate, or of exhibiting the sincerity of their penitence and amendment, by participating in his calamity, and making an effort for his recovery. How far he succeeded is proved in the result. Appalled and grieved to the heart for the melancholy condition of their self-condemned brother, instead of betaking themselves to flight (as they were permitted), and seeking their own safety, *they rent their clothes in anguish, and returned to the city.* Humbled to the dust, they are again brought before Joseph, and again they are taxed with the fraud—*What deed is this that ye have done ?* Ashamed and confounded at such an accusation, under the color of proof, which admitted of no defence, they stood like men without hope. To

frame an excuse they considered useless, and without a single circumstance to favor them, they had nothing to expect but ruined characters, their brother's bondage, and their father's bereavement—and *Judah said, what shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves?* Innocent, however, as they knew themselves of the present charge, they were not quit of their old offence, and it now again steps in with a condemning verdict, for they seem to have looked upon this circumstance also as a visitation of Providence, to bring them into that bondage to which they had consigned their brother. As such, it is probable, they represented it to the governor, for Judah adds—*God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants, behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.* But Joseph, anxious to prove them to the utmost, expostulates against such an act of injustice, and refuses to

punish any but the person who had been convicted of the robbery—*God forbid that I should do so : but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant ; but as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.*

By this wise and artful judgment upon Benjamin, he placed the brethren in a situation, from which he might infallibly discover, not only the measure of their fraternal affection, but the extent also of their filial duty and regard. If they had contentedly left their brother to his fate, and peaceably returned with the distressing intelligence to their father, he had very justly suspected that all was not yet right—that some remnant of their former wickedness still remained, which their recent trouble had allayed, but not eradicated from their bosoms ; in which case, I doubt not, he would yet have imposed upon them heavier trials than those they had already undergone. But so great was their perplexity

and distress, that every doubt vanished, and at once assured him that their repentance had been effectual, and that their amendment was confirmed.

Such, my brethren, is the effect of true repentance! Such is the effect of religion upon the heart! So completely does it change the habits and disposition, that when a man is converted from a sinful life, he is well said, in the Gospel, to become a *new creature*.* While we are ranging the plains of sin, the heart grows callous, and the feelings benumbed; but when we repent and return, God giveth us *a new heart and a new spirit*—tender and sensible—tender of doing any thing that is wrong, and sensible of the sorrows and afflictions of our fellow-creatures; and thus, in this story, we see, that they who once, when provoked only by a little domestic partiality, concerted to bathe

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

their hands in Joseph's inoffensive blood, are now overwhelmed with sorrow for the fate of Benjamin—they who once could first deceive their father with a shameless falsehood, and then mock him with their base and hypocritical condolence, now shrink back with horror and apprehension at what may happen to their aged sire, when the afflicting intelligence is conveyed to him, and he finds himself bereaved of the child who had been the greatest comfort of his age, and whose loss would inevitably *bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave*—and Judah, who, in the field of Dothan, was first to propose the disgraceful bargain with the Israelites, is the foremost to offer himself to redeem his brother from captivity, and his father from distress; and his pleading upon the occasion is a noble specimen of ardent affection and generous feeling—so simple, and yet so comprehensive—so manly, and yet so plaintive, that I

should do it injustice to supply its place with any observations of my own :—

Then Judah came near to Joseph, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharoah.— My lord asked thy servants, saying, Have ye a father or a brother? And we said unto my lord, we have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him; and we said unto my lord, the lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, you shall see my face no more. And it came to pass, when we came up to thy servant, my father, we told him

the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant, my father, said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said, surely he is torn in pieces, and I saw him not since; and if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life, it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die; and thy servants shall bring down the grey hairs of thy servant, our father, with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto

thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide, instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest, peradventure, I see the evil that shall come on my father.

Nothing can possibly be more moving and pathetic than this discourse, involving, as it does, every tender and endearing sentiment; and forcibly, no doubt, it wrought upon the affectionate heart of Joseph. Interested, as he must have been, with the artless narrative, and excited to admiration by the generous self-devotion which it breathed, still he might have concealed these feelings; but, while his interest and admiration were awake, the discourse touched upon a chord which vibrated to all his affections—the mention of his father's distress, and the evil which their calamity might bring upon him, at once

disarmed him of his self-control—*then he could not refrain himself, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me ; and he wept aloud.* They were tears which delighted nature loves to shed : they are like refreshing showers upon the glad sunshine of Heaven, and they relieve the heat and burden of the heart. His was no callous nature ; and, amid all the pomp and greatness of his station, he could be moved with the humble, honest feelings of domestic love, and he thought it no lessening of his dignity to indulge them : *he wept aloud ; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.* I picture to myself the mute anxiety which this mysterious burst of affection must have caused to the sons of Israel, and the sudden confusion which must have followed the impassioned declaration—*I am Joseph !—Doth my father yet live ?* A voice from the mansions of the grave had not more astonished and confounded the self-convicted bre-

thren; the hand of Death himself had not shot a colder chill across their hearts—*His brethren could not answer, for they were troubled at his presence. They could not answer,* but their silence spake more than language can express: it spake their shame and their sorrow—for there is no grief so fervent as that which smoulders in the bosom, and stifles in the utterance; and it spake their repentance, for it exhibited those marks of trouble and distress which ever accompany that thorough conviction of the heinousness of sin which leadeth to amendment of life.

They were troubled at his presence; and it would not have been without reason, had it been any one but Joseph with whom they were to deal; but resentment and revenge were strangers to his kind and affectionate heart, which, like his divine Redeemer's, was ever ready to pity and forgive. Touched with compassion for the pain and fear he had oc-

casioned by the declaration of himself, he has recourse to those soothing expressions which seldom fail to win the heart to confidence and love—and *Joseph said to his brethren, come near to me I pray you—I am JOSEPH YOUR BROTHER, whom ye sold into Egypt.* Intent to glorify his Maker upon every occasion, instead of referring to secondary causes, he attributes his elevation to the overruling Providence of God; and while he artfully endeavours to lessen their compunction on this account, he is no less diligent to extol the unfailing goodness and parental tenderness of Jehovah; and the apology he makes for their conduct, is the loveliest specimen of a generous and exalted mind ever given to the world—*Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.* The conduct of Jo-

seph throughout, proves to us that he did not look with favor upon the wrong done him by his brethren, nor was this apology intended to exonerate them altogether—he spake only as it respected himself and his own feelings; he witnessed their sorrow, he saw the confusion with which they were overwhelmed in his presence, and the spirit of forgiveness, which always commiserates the unfortunate, prompted him to divert their remembrance of the fatal deed, by directing them to the good and over-ruling Providence of God, in the happy issue to which he had made their plans subservient. Having thus far quieted every apprehension on his account, his mind again quickly reverts to his aged and beloved parent. *Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, God hath made me lord of all Egypt, come down unto me, tarry not, and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near to me—there will I nourish thee;*

for yet there are five years of famine, lest thou and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. There is a kindness and joyful solicitude in this charge that cannot but effect every virtuous and feeling heart—every heart which hath known the care and endearments of a fond and indulgent parent, and it is a glorious example for every son and daughter in the world : it shows us that no acquirements of wisdom—of fortune—or of fame, can absolve us from the eternal obligation of filial love ; that no circumstances can ever justify a neglect of our parents, and that no situation in life can exalt us above their service. To endeavour to please our parents in all things is a duty absolute and unalterable—and any, the least, aberration therefrom, is a violation of nature and religion—and is an offence to man, and an offence to God ! Joseph, conscious of the delight which intelligence of his prosperity would cause that parent, who had

watched the progress of his youthful mind, and whose eye had been lit with pleasure at every development of his early virtues—conscious of this delight, (a delight, I believe, thoroughly known to none but those who are parents) he enjoins his brethren to omit nothing that might increase his joy, and induce him to hasten his departure; *and ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.* He then closed this scene with an earnest of his affection, which does honor to human nature, and which is well worthy an illustrious figure of him, who *endured such contradiction of sinners*, and who breathed out his life with a prayer for his betrayers and his murderers! *And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them, and after that his brethren talked with him.* It is quite

impossible that any representation of brotherly love can excel this tender and affecting scene, and it presents us with an example of meek forgiveness which reads a condemning lecture to the present generation, for it forms a striking contrast with the conduct of many—too many of us, who are called Christians, although living under the full disclosure of that scheme of mercy and of love, which commands us to forbear and to forgive one another: for who hath not witnessed the daily jealousies and vexations which happen in domestic life—brothers and sisters taking offence at each other for the veriest trifle, and parents living in open hostility with their children, too proud to acknowledge a fault, and too obdurate to forgive one? And even where we profess to forgive our brethren, too often there is a shameful holding back of confidence and affection, and there is a slowness to do

them good, which too plainly indicates that the language of the lips was not the effusion of the heart. Would we learn, my dear brethren, in what Christian forgiveness consists, we cannot study a better lesson, than that we are now considering: here is a brother who had been envied, hated, banished from his home, and sold for a bond-servant—the authors of all these accumulated wrongs were before him, and he had ample power to recompense them—and he did recompense them, not with *evil for evil*, but by cordially forgiving them, and becoming the friend and benefactor of their households. And this is exactly the rule the apostle hath given us for the exercise of this duty, in which he acknowledges every man to be a brother—*Dearly beloved avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine ene-*

*my hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink :—be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**

And surely, brethren, we have motives strong enough to make us love and practice mercy ; God Almighty hath revealed himself to us a kind and forgiving Father, and in this character he daily exhibits himself to us, for daily and hourly we offend him, by carelessness and neglect, and too often by palpable and premeditated wrong, yet he suffers us to enjoy his bounty, and is *long suffering and ready to forgive*. And where shall we find words to express the mercy and forgiveness, and overflowing love, of Christ ? All the world had offended him, envied, hated, and rejected him, yet, like his type, he wept over their calamities, kindly talked with them of his Father, and lost no opportunity of doing them good ; and while

* Rom. xii. 19—21.

they *pierced his hands and his feet*, and cast his miracles of mercy in his teeth, respired to Heaven the divine and never-to-be-forgotten application—*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do !*

And how shall we dare to hope to share in his happiness while we cherish a spirit at variance with his doctrine and example? Shall we expect that he will forgive us our debt of ten thousand talents, while we take our fellow servant by the throat for only owing us an hundred pence? Will he look over our innumerable offences committed against him, so long as we are prone to resent with severity every trifling fault of our fellow creatures? It is vanity to suppose it!

Let us not deceive ourselves, my brethren, with such a mockery of virtue and religion: every time we address the throne of grace, for the forgiveness of our trespasses, as Jesus Christ himself hath taught us, we, ourselves, pronounce

the condition on which we hope to be heard—*as we forgive them that trespass against us* ; without this, prayer is an abomination unto God, and no sacrifice is acceptable in his sight, as we are taught in the divine sermon on the mount—*Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.** Be it then, always in our remembrance, brethren, that we are to expect to be forgiven only as we forgive. In vain we call for mercy, if we will not show it, and at the day of judgment, when all our hidden offences shall be made manifest, and all our secret sins revealed, if *we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will the Father forgive us our trespasses—he shall have judgment without*

* Matt. v. 23, 24.

*mercy who hath shewed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.**

Sirs, ye are brethren ; adopted together into the family of Jesus Christ, with one Lord, one faith, one baptism, with one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Therefore, love as brethren, and be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.†

* Math. xviii. 35. James ii. 13.

† Acts vii. 26. Eph. iv. 5—32.

LECTURE VII.

LECTURE VII.

ACTS VII. 15.

So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he and
our fathers.

WHATEVER may be *the pleasures of sin*—whatever may be the satisfactions of the sinner, this one thing at least is certain, that the pleasures of virtue are infinitely greater, and that there is no satisfaction like that of doing good. Sin and dissipation may shoot a transient gleam across the heart, which, like the garish festive-lamp, languishes and dies as the oil consumes ; but it belongs only to virtue and religion to produce that tranquil and permanent delight, which, like Him, who is the fountain and fulness of joy, needs not the aid of artificial replenishment. The pleasures of

sin at best are but of short duration—we hold them with an uncertain tenure, and although in the anticipation they promise much, they are found in the possession to be fleeting and unreal. There is a natural affinity between sin and compunction, and they follow in quick succession, and that which in the mouth is sweet as the honeycomb, turns to bitterness in the belly. So it proved with the brethren of Joseph; great as might have been the gratification they felt in basely ridding themselves of the innocent object of their envy, it was but for a short time, and it cost them many painful after-thoughts, sorrow, shame, and remorse—the bitter fruits of an accusing conscience; and which, purchased at so great a price, no one would think of comparing with that peace, which results from innocence, or to the luxury which Joseph experienced in that scene, in which we left him, when he revealed himself to his brethren as a

friend and benefactor, and kissed them all in the tears of ecstasy and love !

And as it is pleasurable, so also, as St. Paul saith, *godliness is profitable unto all things* ; not that the apostle means to assert, that it always directly leads to worldly riches and worldly distinctions, but refers rather to those spiritual blessings which attend upon virtue and true religion—comfort in afflictions—contentment with our lot—and *peace and joy in believing* the promises of God. Yet, most certain it is, that the upright and the religious man will seldom be found in want ; so careful is the Almighty to minister to the necessities of his servants, that it formed a theme for the matchless song of David—*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord ; and he delighteth in his way. I have been young, and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.** And reason good,

* Psalm xxxvii. 23, 25.

for religion, while it purifies the soul, girds up the body for active life, and becomes the parent of frugality and industry; while, it is equally true that, it is oftentimes made the road to prosperity and honor. An example of this we have in the history we are now considering, where, under every disadvantage of a strange people, and a foreign land, the illustrious Joseph emerged from the obscurity of a bond-slave and a prisoner, to be the first lord of Egypt, and the light and glory of Pharoah's court! How excellently well he acquitted himself in that exalted station—not only winning for himself the favor of his royal master, but the love and esteem of all around, we may infer from the peculiar interest which the arrival of his brethren excited—and *when the fame thereof was heard in Pharoah's house, it pleased Pharoah well, and his servants.* It seems, indeed, that Joseph was not merely admitted as a *father to*

Pharoah—his counsellor upon all important state occasions, but, that he enjoyed an intimacy with him, to which subjects and courtiers seldom attain. For Pharoah is not only pleased with the visit of his servant's brethren, but immediately determines on removing all his kindred into his dominions, that Joseph might the more readily exercise his kindness towards them—and *Pharoah said unto Joseph, say unto thy brethren, this do ye ; lade your beasts, and go, get you into the land of Canaan ; and take your father, and your households, and come unto me ; and I will give you of the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat of the fat of the land.* He then directs that they shall take waggons to bring them down, bidding them not to regard *their stuff*—their domestic goods—their furniture and food, assuring them that he would supply their place by richer and better, as his words imply—

for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.

Exemplary, indeed, must have been the conduct of Joseph, to have so much excited the interest of the king, and so completely to have won the love and veneration of all his court and household, for these are nestling places of envy and jealousy—but his exalted virtue and meek dignity seem to have gained an entire ascendancy over every selfish feeling; and while he diffuses these blessings, which are the natural offspring of virtue, on all around, he seems to have received his due reward in universal affection and approbation.

Joseph having complied with the gracious command of his sovereign, giving them not only ample provision for his father on the journey, but also *ten she asses laden with the good things of Egypt*, by which he might judge of the richness and luxury of the land to which he

was invited, he once more distinguishes the inoffensive Benjamin, with gifts, far exceeding those of his brethren, and sent them away with this necessary admonition—*See that ye fall not out by the way.* I say necessary admonition, for however true their repentance might have been, and most true it certainly had been proved, yet the infection of our corrupt nature remaineth, and holds perpetual warfare with our better feelings. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit,* as the apostle saith, and Joseph was fearful lest the discovery he had made, with all its circumstances, might operate as a fresh incentive to debate and envy; he therefore delivers it to them as a friendly advice—*See that ye fall not out by the way.* With this they departed, to return to their father in the land of Canaan.

With trembling anxiety, much increased by their vexatious detention, the aged Jacob awaited the return of

his children from their precarious journey; and great, no doubt, was the pleasure he experienced in again greeting them on their arrival, with Simeon, also, who had been imprisoned since their first visit. But what words are equal to describe his joy and astonishment, when the unexpected intelligence burst upon his enraptured ear—*Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt!* The relation of the scene, in the simple language of the historian, is best suited to convey to us the effect which it produced—and *Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.* A discovery so unexpected—so extraordinary—and, indeed, so improbable, could not fail at once to excite all the feelings of joy and hope and fear: and, in the confusion, his incredulity gained the ascendance, and overwhelmed his heart—he *believed them not*; but, when he saw the preparations made for his journey, and heard of all the glory of his beloved

child, *his spirit revived* ; and his first words are a glowing picture of a good man's gratitude—*It is enough ; Joseph my son is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die.*

Measures were soon taken for the accomplishment of his wish, and full of hope and gratitude he set out, accompanied by all his household, to meet his long lost child. On the journey, Moses informs us, they stopped at Beersheba, which was situated upon the borders of Canaan ; and, before he entered into a strange land, he offered sacrifice unto Jehovah, that he might learn whether it pleased him ; and this shows us, my brethren, how careful we ought to be, in every thing we undertake, lest our own inclinations lead us into evil—it shows us, that upon all occasions we should strive to learn the will of God, and determine on doing it, however contrary to our interest and our pleasures—so did Israel : the son of his

love was in the land of Egypt, but he ventured not to go to him, until first he had enquired of the Lord ; and were we, in every instance, to follow his example, it would save us from many difficult and troublesome conditions. In answer to his sacrifice, *God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob: and he said, Here am I*; an answer indicating a readiness to obey. God then confirms the covenant he had made with Abraham and Isaac, his fathers, and bids him proceed upon his journey—*And he said, I am God, the God of thy father, fear not to go down into Egypt, for there I will make of thee a great nation: and I will go down with thee, and will also surely bring thee up again, and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes*. If there be any virtue which hath an innate dwelling in the human heart, it is the love of our country ; connected with it there are so many pleasing associations, and so many tender en-

dearments, that we leave our homes with streaming eyes and aching hearts. To Jacob, the land of Canaan must have possessed all these charms which attach us to our country, heightened by the remembrance, that God, in an especial manner, had given it to his fathers for an inheritance. To leave it without commandment or permission was like slighting the gift and abandoning the riches of God's goodness, in the vain hope of improving his condition by human means; and hence might have arisen that carefulness and reluctance which the historian hath so particularly noticed in the conduct of the Patriarch. But the Almighty, in this revelation, removed all his fears, by assuring him, that *He himself* would accompany him into Egypt, and would there make him a great nation—and that *He* would not forsake him until he had again conducted him into his own land; a promise which he literally fulfilled, when, by his presence,

in the pillar of fire, and the pillar of cloud, he led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, and through the terrible wilderness, and destroyed their enemies before them. The concluding part of the revelation is of a private nature—a promise of domestic happiness—and *Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes*; intimating, by this, that he should die in peace, surrounded by his family, and that his darling child should close his eyes—the last tender office we perform for those we love.

All scruples thus removed, again he pursued his journey with his children, and his children's children, in all, sixty-six souls.

Judah—the zealous Judah (zealous once in vice—now changed in heart and manners, he is foremost in the cause of virtue)—is sent before, to direct the way, and to apprise Joseph of their coming. No sooner does he hear of their approach, than the dutiful son *made ready his cha-*

riot, and went up to meet Israel, and presented himself unto him ; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

O, it must have been a glorious scene ! To have witnessed the first lord of Egypt, unmindful of his state and dignity, leaping from his chariot, and presenting himself in reverence before his aged sire—to have seen his ardent affection as he wept upon his neck—and to have heard the grateful resignation of the Patriarch—*Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.* It is a scene that can hardly be contemplated without yielding both pleasure and improvement, for it presents to us the most striking picture of the relative duties of parents and children that can be imagined : it shows us, in the first place, that nothing will justify a man in the neglect of his parents, and that no wisdom or riches, no state or office, can ever raise him above them—though I were a prince and they were

but cottagers, still they are my superiors ! whatever be their failings—whatever be their circumstances, still, by every call of religion and of nature—by every law of God and man—they command our love, our esteem, our veneration ; and he must have a heart dead to all the tender sensibilities of nature, who hath not admitted this amiable and universal dictate of humanity. Many, oh ! many, are the anxious hours we have caused before we knew their meaning—painful hours of watching and of toil ; and could we look into the bosoms of our parents, and read the language of their throbbing hearts, and number all their cares and self-denials for our sakes, we should learn, that however fervent in our affection—however exemplary in our duty, still, still we must remain their debtors !

Oh ! did we know the tears that have been shed over our little pains, and the sighs that have escaped over our infant.

dangers, and the watchful days and sleepless nights that have been passed on our account, while yet we hung upon our mothers' breasts, we could not lock our hearts in steely apathy against a mother's call. Oh! did we know the early risings and the late upsittings, and the sweating brow, and the dangerous enterprise, that have been undergone, to supply our helplessness and give us daily bread, we could not bring *one railing accusation* against a father, or turn our back upon his necessities. This Joseph knew when he went forth to meet the aged Israel; arrayed, as he was, in all the glory of Egypt, he awaits not the arrival of his father, but rides out to do him honor, and even, before he gratifies the quick and glowing feelings of affection, he presents himself in reverence. And so also knew, one who was greater than Joseph. Our gracious Redeemer, although Lord of all, was not only subject to his parents during the time of

youth, but they seem to have occupied his solicitude throughout life, for, even in that last dark hour of distress and anguish, when he hung bleeding upon the cross, the sight of his aged and sorrowful mother, appears for a time to have suspended every other consideration, and we hear him, with all the affection of the Son of Man, and all the benignity of the Son of God, commending her to the care of the beloved disciple. *Behold thy mother !* was his short and significant expression ; it was a glorious charge, and well the Evangelist understood it, for from that hour he received her, and nourished her, as his own parent.

There is an amiableness in filial affection, which has ever attracted the admiration of mankind, and how well pleasing it is in the sight of God, we may infer from the promise of blessing which he hath annexed to it. It is, indeed, a pity that these examples of filial piety are not more generally copied ; instead

of which, (oh, base ingratitude !) our children, now, no sooner pass the difficulties of youth, than they forget the arm that sustained them, and the paps that gave them suck—no sooner do they advance in the world, than they lose all concern for their parents, and sometimes treat them with downright disrespect ; this is most abominable, and it is a reproach not only to religion but to humanity. It was not so with Him who is our example in all things—it was not so with Ruth, who adhered to her mother in the extremity of her distress—nor was it so with Joseph ; all the state and glory of Pharoah's court vanished in the smile of the good old man—and the first lord of Egypt could acknowledge his father as his superior, though an undistinguished individual, and a dependant upon his bounty !

And if the conduct of Joseph, upon this occasion, is worthy the imitation of every son, so also is that of Jacob wor-

thy the imitation of every parent—and it discovers an affection suitable to that which, in the early period of life, he had shown his favorite child—*Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive!* This is the language of contentment; as if this unexpected blessing had filled the measure of his happiness, he looks no further on this side the grave; his beloved son had been given him, as it were, from the dead—he beheld him advanced to the highest degree of prosperity and honor, and all his early indications of wisdom and of virtue more than realized; this was the earthly crown of his rejoicing, and while he gratefully acknowledged the goodness of Providence, he looked forward to *the crown of glory which fadeth not away**—*Now let me die!* To die in peace, surrounded by our children, to whom we may impart our advice and blessing,

* 1 Peter v. 4.

is a wish we are all apt to indulge, and to look with thankful joy upon every mark of divine favor experienced by them, is what we might naturally expect from such a fond and righteous parent as Jacob; and it is a specimen of paternal interest well worthy our observance. It was not the prosperity to which he was introduced—it was not the good things of Egypt, nor the pride of his son's estate, that gladdened the old man's heart, and filled it with religious gratitude—all these things gave way to the lofty reflection upon the over-ruling Providence of God, which had so long and so wonderfully preserved his son—*Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.* I pause not, at present, to deduce from this part of the story the duty of parents in general; I entreat you only to lay it to heart, remembering, that all these things were *written for our learning, and are pro-*

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fitable for our instruction in righteousness.

In this manner Joseph met his father and his brethren, after an absence of more than twenty years. And throughout the whole proceeding, we trace the hand of God secretly moving the machinery of his Providence, defeating the devices of the wicked, bearing up his servant in distress, and accomplishing by a train of events his predestinated plans: and the great lesson we learn from the whole story is, that *the mighty God of Jacob* is not only the author and controller of the universe in general, but that every individual in particular is the object of his good and gracious Providence; and that, while by Him kings rule, and kingdoms are upheld, by Him no less is the poor man relieved, and the economy of his cottage regarded! *A man's heart deviseth the way; but God directeth his steps.**

* Proverbs xvi. 9.

accusing conscience ; in the glad hope of his Redeemer, *death lost his sting*, and in the realization of that hope *the grave hath lost her victory* ; for it is written, that he *was gathered to his people*.

After the death of his father, again the brethren became alarmed, lest Joseph should now avenge his wrongs upon them ; they feared he had only been prevented from visiting them with punishment, out of respect to his aged parent—that obstacle was now removed ; and when *the brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him ; and they sent a messenger unto Joseph*, acknowledging their wrong, and begging, in the name of their departed father, that he would forgive them.

It was now forty years since the offence was committed, and no less than twenty since they had received assurance of forgiveness, yet we see their sin was

still a source of grievous remembrance, and constantly filled them with the terror of imaginary evil. But the noble heart of Joseph had never felt resentment, much less cherished it so long, and when he saw their humiliation, and heard their piteous deprecation, again he wept, and again he urged the same apology for them, as when he first made himself known to them, pointing to the over-ruling Providence of God, which bringeth good out of evil—*Fear not, said he, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not, I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.* Thus reconciled to his brethren, he remained their benefactor continually. And after being ruler over the kingdom of Egypt, with great wisdom and policy, for eighty years, he was called to inherit

the everlasting kingdom of his Redeemer; leaving behind him an example of all the relative duties of life, and all the holy affections of the heart, and a specimen of that unshaken integrity and firm reliance upon God, which never fail the possessor in leading him *out of much tribulation into the kingdom of God*. And his virtues and his faith will continue a theme of instruction and delight, and unqualified admiration, until "the last syllable of recorded time!"

Thus, my brethren, have we finished our review of this interesting story, into which I have endeavoured to blend as much useful instruction as possible, and I trust it hath not been in vain. And while the remembrance of all that befell the brethren, with their fears, and difficulties, and sorrows, warns you to shun the road of wickedness, let the exalted character of Joseph be your encouragement and your guide in the paths of virtue and religion.

But, in quitting the subject, let us never lose sight of a principal object, for which the Spirit of God hath recorded the history of this patriarch—to lead us to Jesus Christ, whom he resembled as nearly as the imperfection of human nature can, and of whom he was one of the most eminent types. Let us, my dear brethren, in the contemplation of this interesting and affecting history, turn our eyes to the meek and blessed Son of God, and establish our faith in His mercy, and forgiveness, and support. Joseph, it is true, was only a reflection of his master, but he was a true one. When we hear of his being sold by his brethren, let it remind us of Him who was sold into the hands of his enemies, and learn to shun the first advances of those passions, which lead to such wickedness; lest we sell Him again, and put Him to an open shame. When we hear of his being tempted in the house of

Potiphar, let it remind us of Him, who was *led up by the spirit to be tempted of the devil*,* that in mercy he might be *touched with the feelings of our infirmities*;† and while it inspires us with gratitude, let us rejoice in the victory He obtained over the tempter—the great adversary of our souls. When we hear of his unjust imprisonment, let it remind us of Him who *suffered for us, the just for the unjust*,‡ and who was imprisoned awhile in the grave; and let us endeavour to bury all our sins in the same tomb. When we hear of his deliverance and promotion in the kingdom of Egypt, let it remind us of Him who, *through death, destroyed him that had the power of death*,§ and who burst from the prison-house of the grave, and *is exalted to the right hand of power* in the kingdom

* Math. iv. 1.

† Heb. iv. 15.

‡ 1 Peter iii. 18.

§ Heb. ii. 14.

of God,* and let us *set our affections on things above*. When we hear of his dispensing food to the famished people, let it remind us of Him who hath given to us *the bread of life*, and let us be careful *to eat thereof that we may live for ever*.† When we read of his ready forgiveness of those who had offended him, let it remind us of Him, who hath offered remission of sins to all who, with true penitent hearts, and lively faith, acknowledge their transgressions, and come unto him;‡ and while it inspires our hope, and elicits our thankfulness, let it admonish us that His pardon is conditional, and that we must forgive in order to be forgiven. And, finally, let the interview between Joseph and his father remind us that we all have a Father in Heaven, to whom the holy and unblemished Joseph hath been called, to

* Mark xvi. 19.

† John vi. 48, 50.

‡ Math. xi. 28, 29.

*shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.** And that if we would resemble Him in glory hereafter, we must resemble Him in holiness here, for WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD.†

* Dan. xii. 3.

† Heb. xii. 14.

FINIS.







